The ENDLESS BANQUET

A Thematic Explanation of the Qur'an

VOLUME THREE

HAMZAH ABDUL-MALIK

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A Thematic Explanation of the Qur'an

VOLUME THREE

By

HAMZAH ABDUL-MALIK

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

> We have made the Qur'an easy to understand, but is there anyone who would pay attention? [54:17]

I was 10 years old when I was first asked to read through the whole Qur'an in English. I had memorized almost half of the Qur'an by then, so I was excited to begin learning what it all meant. However, I distinctly remember opening up a Yusuf Ali translation and reading words like "thou", "thy", "similitude", and "hath not". As a child, I felt as if I needed to take a class in Shakespearian language before being able to know what the Qur'an means. I was able to finish reading the translation during Ramadan, but it was difficult.

As I grew older, I dedicated myself to learning Arabic. I finished memorizing the Qur'an, spent 15 years studying overseas, and eventually graduated from al-Azhar University. During that time, I began coming across translations that were easier to read. Yet, I still felt there was something lost: I couldn't see the connections between the āyāt and Surahs by reading the translations alone. At that time, if you asked me what the relationship was between Surah al-Baqarah and Surah Āl 'Imrān, I would have had no idea. I wouldn't have even been able to describe the connections between the beginning and end of any given Surah.

All this changed when I began studying two scholars: Habīb 'Umar b. Hāfidh and Imam Muhammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwi. I used to attend Habīb 'Umar's public tafsīr lectures in the city square in Tarim, where he would weave the Qur'anic themes together and explain it as if Allah was speaking directly to us. Then I moved to Egypt and began - and ultimately completed - translating over 1,500 pages of Imam al-Sha'rāwi's commentary of Surah *al-Mā'idah* and *al-Tawba.* This process opened my eyes to the wholistic messages of the Qur'an and the undercurrent of themes that connect the Qur'an to our everyday lives. I began thinking, "If people

who know Arabic have difficulty understanding these connections on their own, then it must be even harder for those who don't know Arabic." I began looking for a reading guide that could help the average person understand broader meanings of the Qur'an in the translation they were reading and develop a greater appreciation for what Allah was saying. And it is for that reason why I began writing this book, which was completed on the 27th of Ramadan 1441/2020.

The Endless Banquet is a three-volume reading guide of the Qur'an for people who want to have an intimate relationship with the Qur'an and read it as if Allah is speaking directly to them. It was written in easy language and focuses on explaining each Surah by grouping its āyāt together that share common themes. If you want to read the Qur'an and study its fundamental themes and connections without having to resort to sorting through thousands of pages of Arabic tafsīr, then this book is designed for you.

Throughout the series you will discover the benefits of why certain phrases are repeated, why the Qur'an repeats the same stories but with different details, the wisdom of how āyāt shift from speaking about law to stories, or from theological arguments to descriptions of heaven and hell. You can dis-cover connections between each Surah of the Qur'an and see the wisdom in their order and even learn how each Juz is divided upon overarching themes. The series will teach you the context for why certain āyāt are revealed and why they are still relevant today.

Ultimately, the goal of this work is to help people develop an appreciation for the Qur'an, especially the parts of the Qur'an that they don't usually read. By using this guide, they can begin developing a greater sense of wonder and awe that the Qur'an is supposed to inspire in the reader. Ideally, the reader will be inspired to ask new questions about the Qur'an and seek to find more connections that they were unaware of before and feel that they have a personal relationship with the Qur'an by being more familiar with it.

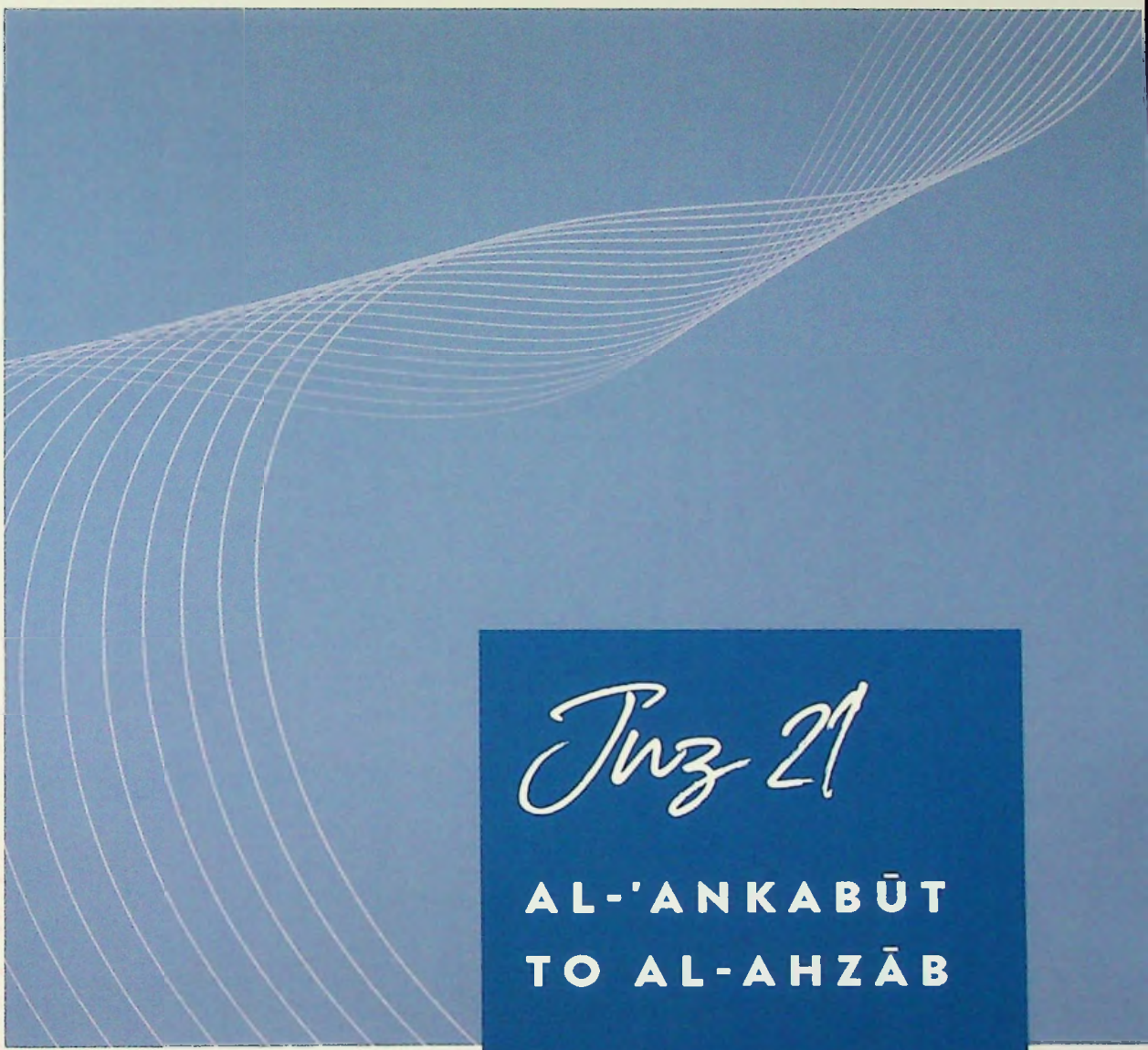
Each chapter of this book covers one Juz. While reading your Arabic Qur'an or your preferred translation, you should use The Endless Banquet as a guide to see the themes and connections for the āyāt that you are reading. One important point to keep in mind is that the Surahs of Qur'an are already divided into four major themes according to the Prophet ﷺ. He said, "I have been given the Seven Long Surahs in place of the Torah; I have been given the Hundreds in place of the *Zabūr;* and I have been given the Repeaters in place of the *Injīl;* and I have been given the

unique privilege of the Partitioned Surahs." [Reported by al-Imam Aḥmad in his Musnad]

The Seven Long Surahs approximately cover the first ten Juz. These surahs contain a heavy emphasis on laws and the stories of the Prophets and their people, with particular detail given to the Jews and the Christians (i.e. People of the Book). The Surahs termed "The Hundreds" cover the next ten Juz. They emphasize the signs of Allah's existence in nature and an abundance of rational proofs for Allah's attributes. The last ten Juz cover the Repeaters and the Partitioned. The Repeaters highlight the proofs of the Day of Resurrection and magnitude of Allah's Power and control over creation, while the Partitioned are the shorter Surahs revealed in Makkah partitioned by "Bismillāh Al-Raḥmān Al-Raḥīm". They specifically address the Prophet Muhammad while he was living through the hardships of spreading the Message in Makkah under severe persecution of the Quraish.

It is my hope that this book inspires a new generation of Qur'an readers, and that it rekindles a love for Qur'an inspired by its meanings, relevance, and connections that address the human condition. I pray that the Qur'an opens the hearts of all who read it, and that the The Endless Banquet becomes the key that helps unfasten the locks that have inhibited them from the impact of the Reminder. May Allah make us all among those who are guided by its words and realize the promise of its rewards.

> Surely this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright and gives good news to the believers who do good that they shall have a great reward. [17:9]



Juz 21

AL-'ANKABŪT TO AL-AHZĀB

SURAH AL-ʿANKABŪT

ĀYĀT 46-69

Now that the disbelievers' position with Allah has been explained, Allah brings this surah to a close by reminding the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that his position is unassailable; protected from the shallow and weak arguments through which his opponents attack his Prophethood or his miracles. Here, Allah addresses both of these issues.

As for their rejecting him as a Prophet, Allah proves to us that the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is clear: there are no people teaching him this book, he cannot read nor write, and he did not have any of this knowledge before it was revealed to him.

As for the miracles he has brought, Allah tells us that if they do not believe in the most eloquent book that possesses inexhaustible wisdom and knowledge, there is no miracle that could ever convince them. This is why they challenge the Prophet; to produce the punishment as proof of his Prophethood. They have entrenched themselves so far into arrogance that they would rather experience the torment of Allah than to believe and save themselves by following Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Ironically, they feel so comfortable amongst all of the blessings Allah has given them that, instead of becoming humble and grateful, they feel secure from Divine accountability. It is as if they are ignoring all of the signs that show it was Allah who gave them their sense of security in the first place: the sustenance for livestock, creation of the universe, life-giving rain, and safety them from their fears when they call upon Him. No amount of signs will convince them, and they will not gain more than the worldly pleasures that Allah extends to them until their final account is due.

Hence, Allah tells the believers to struggle for Him alone, and to take advantage of the paths of guidance He has given so that Allah can be with them in this life and in the next.

SURAH AL-RŪM

In the previous surah, Allah focused our attention on the weakness of disbelievers and highlighted how they have no protection from Allah. He closed the surah off with instructions for the believers to struggle for His sake and follow the guidance He provides them. Allah then gives us Surah *al-Rūm* to build on the ending of the previous surah while emphasizing the strength of the believers.

Allah promises the believers that the Byzantines will eventually defeat the Persians. The significance of this is that the pagans were rooting for the Persians, who they considered them to be pagans like them, as opposed to the Byzantines, who were a Christian nation that claimed to follow revelation like the Muslims. In this scenario, if those who claimed to follow guidance succeeded, even if they followed it partially, were given a clear sign that the believers and followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ were destined for greater success.

As proof, Allah reminds us to study the past civilizations that were even more powerful than the Persians, yet they were still destroyed by their own arrogance.

Allah also details the signs that were briefly mentioned in Surah *al-ʿAnkabūt,* which further establishes proof of the validity of the Qur'an. Special emphasis is placed on the natural laws that Allah has embedded in human life. Thus, Allah directs us to reflect on

the natural relationships between men and women, waking and sleeping, our composition, the weather patterns, and even how raindrops are formed in clouds. All of this points to the fact that this religion is a natural religion and that in order for believers to live according to their true nature, they must follow the guidance given to them by Allah.

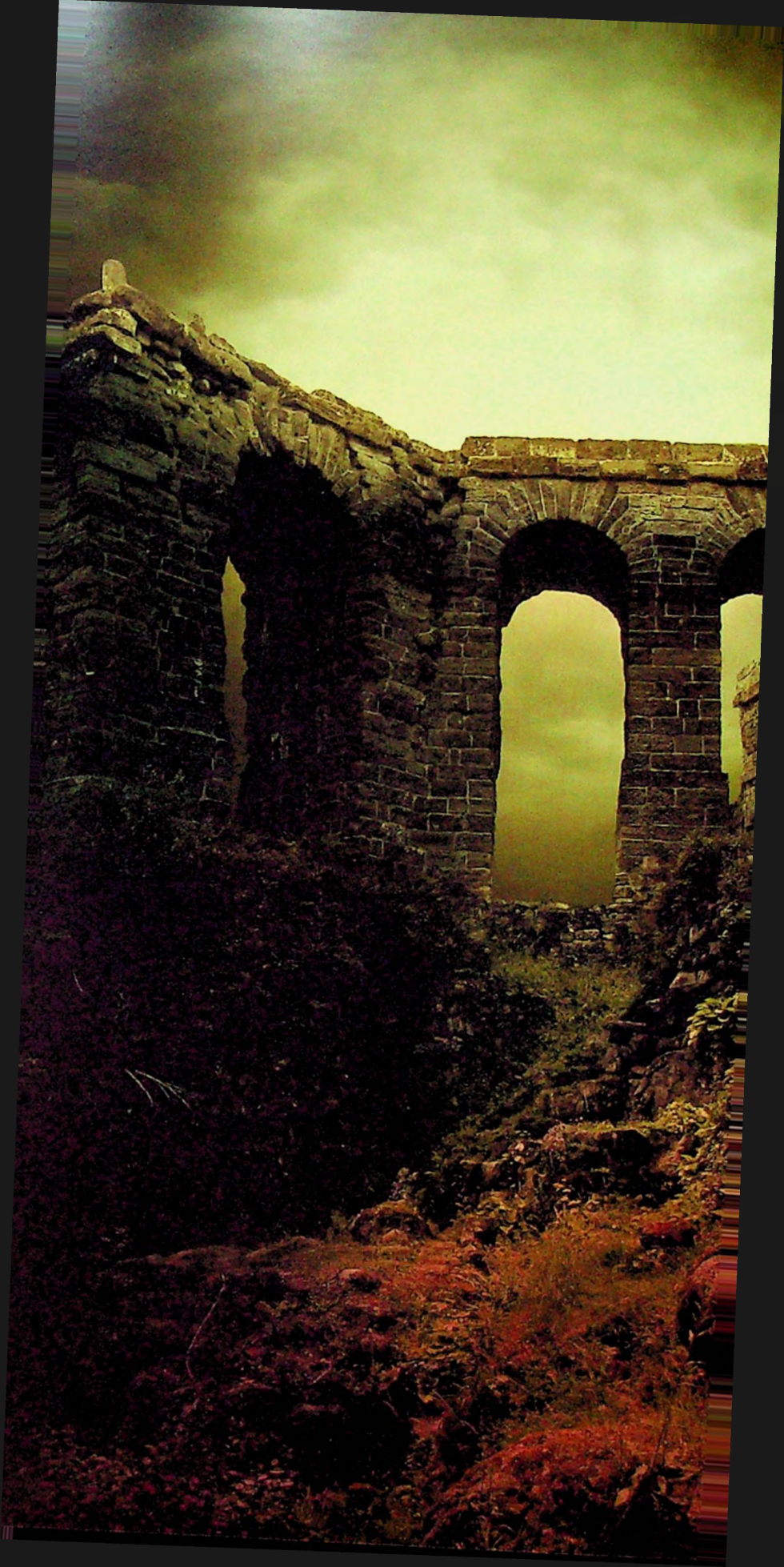
When we fail to observe the laws Allah has given us, it disrupts our own nature as well as the natural balance of the land and the sea which, in turn, causes more harm to us. The same applies to unnatural financial transactions that create an imbalance in the natural flow of wealth throughout society. However, the disbelievers ignore all of these realities, focusing only on the surface-level worldly matters.

At the end of this surah, Allah reminds the Prophet that he will encounter people who ignore every sign of Allah's glory around them and all of the signs He has collated for them in the Qur'an. They will refuse to take heed and follow His guidance and there is nothing that can be done for them so long as they decide to remain close-minded about Allah. Those are the people who have nothing to look forward to in the next life.

SURAH LUQMĀN

Surah *al-Rūm* ends with the declaration that every example of Allah's guidance has been made plain in the Qur'an, and that Allah's promise is the truth. In this surah, we are given a summary of this guidance, and a demonstration of how disbelievers take this message as a game. Ultimately, they will be remorseful on the Day of Judgment for ignoring all of the directions Allah has given them.

As proof, Allah reminds us to study the past civilizations that were even more powerful than the Persians, yet they were still destroyed by their own arrogance.



We find an example of the guidance that the Qur'an provides in the form of the advice that Luqmān gives to his son. He gives him a short list of general instructions:

- Worship Allah alone.
- Treat parents well.
- Be mindful of Allah.
- Pray.
- Enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.
- Don't be arrogant.
- Conduct yourself with modesty.

These are the same type of instructions that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is giving to humanity, along with abundant proof that he is speaking on behalf of Allah. Additionally, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is warning humanity of the accountability that they will face with Allah on the Day of Judgment.

In spite of Allah making these teachings absolutely clear, the disbelievers still reject him. They spend resources to mislead people away from guidance, insist on being arrogant, and close their minds to the truth, opting to follow the ways of their forefathers instead. Nevertheless, Allah tells them that His knowledge is still infinite, His control over the creation is absolute, and He knows how they secretly call on Him in their near-death experiences.

In the end, just as Allah established in the beginning, He reminds humanity not to take His mercy lightly. He alone controls all circumstances of human life, possesses knowledge of the end of time and controls the rain, what is in the womb, future provisions, and death. So we should be conscious of Him, and prepare for our meeting with Him on the Day of Judgment.

SURAH AL-SAJDAH

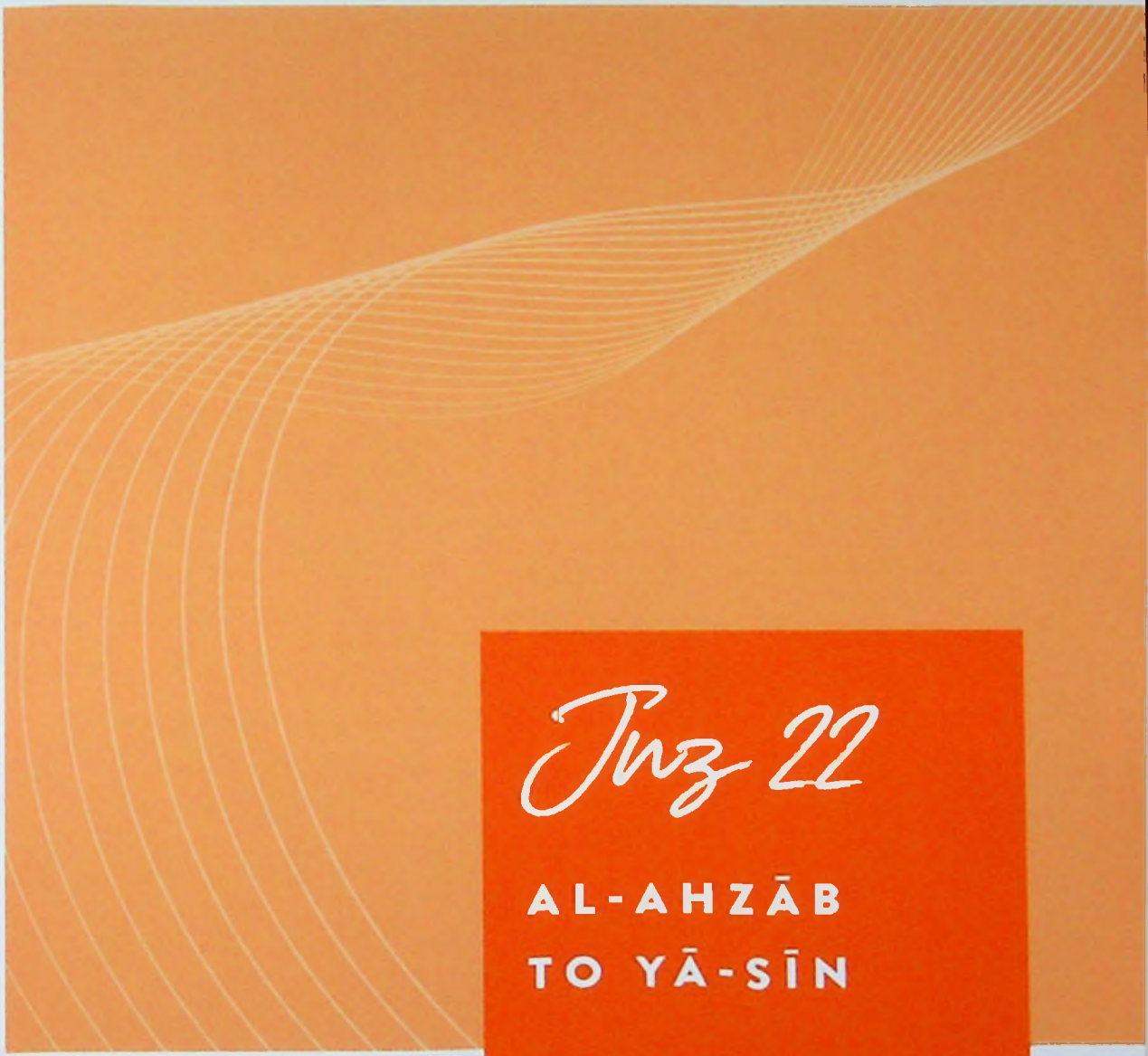
In previous surahs, Allah established numerous proofs regarding the truth of the Day of Judgment, citing all of the signs of how Allah has full control of His creation and how resurrection is easy for Him. He also gave us proof of the validity of the Qur'an and how its instructions are a clear guidance for humanity.

In this surah, Allah will give us a glimpse of the prophecies of the unseen realm from the beginning of creation to what is in store for humanity when they encounter the Day of Judgment.

Allah briefly goes over how He originated all of creation including the creation of Prophet Ādam. From there, He teaches us the realities of death, the state of disbelievers on the Day of Reckoning, and the terrors of Hell, all of which are intended to induce fear and inspire desire for Allah's mercy.

Those who believe in Allah will take heed of this, and their knowledge will manifest itself in how they worship. They will feel uneasy with their state in this world and strive for the best of states in the Hereafter. Meanwhile, the disbelievers will be given tests and tribulations as a reminder, but if they do not cease in their arrogance before death, they will find themselves in the worst of states when they meet their Lord.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Juz 22

AL-AHZĀB TO YĀ-SĪN

SURAH AL-AḤZĀB

ĀYĀT
1-27

In Surah *al-Sajdah,* prophecies were given to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the past and future unseen realities were made clear to humanity, thereby removing all doubts held by the disbelievers regarding the Day of Judgment. In this section, Allah shifts our focus to the Muslims around the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and addresses the doubts that some of them have experienced concerning his leadership. He also highlights how He has tested them with trials that have revealed the hypocrites among them as well as those whose faith was shaken.

Allah begins the surah by establishing the status of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in his community; he has the status of a spiritual father but, unlike the Prophets before him, will not be the physical father of any of the men.

As the spiritual father of the community, he will be responsible for testifying to Allah about our sincerity and dedication to the message that he has brought. This dedication will be tested and judged by Allah just as it was during the Battle of the Trench. During this battle, the dangers had mounted against the community to the point that it shook them to the core. It is during such testing times, in which one seems to have lost everything, that those who have true faith and trust in Prophet Muhammad ﷺ can be identified.

In such situations, the hypocrites will attempt to find any excuse to abandon the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, leave the religion, and try to influence others to do the same. As for the believers, they use these

situations to uphold their commitment to Allah and His Messenger, or at least intend to do so if they are given the opportunity to prove themselves.

As a result of this battle, the disbelievers suffered a great loss. Those who betrayed the Prophet were defeated, and the community inherited the spoils of the enemy all because of Allah's aid and support of His Messenger. The reality is that Allah could have made the battle easy for the Prophet, but one of the wisdoms behind why He made it difficult was to distinguish between the hypocrites and the believers, and give those who were sincere the opportunity to demonstrate their dedication to Allah and gain the highest rewards.

ĀYĀT
28-72

In the first half of Surah *al-Aḥzāb*, Allah gives us a picture of how men violate their trust with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He shows us that trials and tribulations will inevitably reveal both the hidden hypocrisy within some people's hearts as well as the strong faith demonstrated by believers who use times of hardship as an opportunity to prove their faith. In sum, while the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent as a mercy for humanity, he is also a test to determine people's commitment to Allah through their commitment to following the Messenger of Allah.

This trial is not reserved just for men. In the second half of this surah, Allah places special emphasis on the marriages of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, specifying regulations as to how his wives should conduct themselves. Previously, we have observed that men have their unique ways in which they must respect the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, especially when they are called to obey him, trust him in the field of battle, and give their wealth. Similarly, Allah gives the women of the Messenger a mandate to trust and follow him, not only as the Prophet, but as their husband as well.

The wives of the Prophet carry even greater responsibility towards him than a normal Muslim woman would for her husband because Allah has given the Prophet's wives the status of Mothers of the Believers, as found in this surah.

That said, the etiquettes between the Prophet and his wives are not entirely exclusive to his household. Their interactions also act as a model for all married Muslim couples. The Prophet's etiquette with his wives are well-known. He helped with housekeeping, played games with them, was light-hearted, encouraged them to pray, drank from the same cup as they did, and possessed various other admirable characteristics that can be studied in Hadith books. However, these etiquettes were not one-sided, and Allah gives the Prophet's wives some clear guidelines to follow in order for them to live up to the status they have been given. In this surah, Allah teaches them to:

- Sacrifice the life of this world for the life of the Hereafter.
- Refrain from clear major sins.
- Remain devotional and righteous to Allah.
- Avoid any form of seductive speech with other men.
- Keep to themselves at home.
- Dress modestly.
- Read Qur'an, make dhikr, and seek knowledge.

Allah also teaches us that He is the one who sanctions the Prophet's marriages and guides him to what is right, and therefore, no Muslim – male or female – has the right to question his judgment with regard to whom he marries. This extends to his marriage to Zaynab bint Jaḥsh, who was formerly married to the Prophet's adopted son. This marriage was considered unorthodox because the Arabs used to view their adopted sons as their biological sons, so Allah or-

dered the Prophet to marry Zaynab to break the taboo of marrying an adopted son's ex-wife. Earlier in the surah, Allah emphasized that adopted sons do not have the status of biological sons, which makes foster fathers their guardians rather than their *actual* fathers. Here, Allah drives this point home by instructing the Prophet to marry Zaynab, who already had a prestigious family status among the Arabs making her a suitable candidate to be his wife. This marriage sets a precedent for religious leaders to eradicate the stigma of marrying a woman who society wrongfully considers to be an unsuitable prospect. For many Western cultures, this includes marrying cousins as well.

One of the prominent themes in this surah is the Prophet's elevated status among humanity. Allah and His angels send their salutations and blessings upon him, his judgment is considered indisputable, and those who harm him are cursed by Allah.

As the surah comes to a close, Allah reminds us that all people will be held accountable for their behaviour, not just towards each other, but also towards the Prophet. He warns this nation against treating the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the people of Mūsā treated him. This last section makes it clear that Allah will not accept anyone who refuses to acknowledge the status of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. And those who follow Prophet Muhammad ﷺ will not only find success and protection in this life, but also in the next.

SURAH AL-SABA'

In this surah, Allah extends the theme of the status of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, but this time, He is addressing the idolaters instead of the Muslim community.

Allah reminds us that all people will be held accountable for their behaviour, not just towards each other, but also towards the Prophet.

The pagan opponents of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ were blinded by their shallow understanding of the life of this world, unwilling to accept the unseen prophecies that the Prophet was teaching them. Hence, they refused to believe in the concept of one being resurrected after they have died and their body has fully decomposed. They refused to accept that a Prophet of Allah could be someone lacking material wealth and living a humble life, as if wealth was an indicator of truth or Allah's favour.

So in this surah, Allah reminds them that He has absolute control over all of creation. Additionally, He counsels them that they should believe in the reality of the Day of Resurrection with the same certainty with which they believe in the world around them.

Allah also gives us a glimpse into the lives of Prophets Dāwūd and Sulaymān, proving that if He wills, He can give Prophets the ability to control nature and even control the jinn. But even a person like Prophet Sulaymān, who had all the wealth in the world, the ability to manipulate nature, and knowledge of the languages of animals, would not be able to escape the decree of Allah, and death would still overtake him.

We learn that Allah could use a sign as small as a worm to show the reality of the unseen. And even the jinn would be completely oblivious to this reality had it not been for that small sign. If Allah can send a worm to show the truth of the unseen to the jinn, there is no excuse for a person to reject a much greater sign in the form of a great Messenger.

Furthermore, Allah goes further to warn the pagans of being spiritually deluded and blinded by wealth by giving them the example of the People of Saba'. These were people who became so spoiled with the ease that Allah gave them that they began asking Allah for hardship. So Allah removed their blessing, which is a situation that the Arabs, too, have experienced in the past.

Allah then directs the Prophet to teach them about the realities of the Day of Judgment, and how much they will regret rejecting him and his message. Allah shows us that, although they were informed about this Day and knew what to expect all along, they still refused to acknowledge their own mistakes and will blame everyone but themselves for being punished in Hell. And none of their wealth will be of any usage to them in the Hereafter.

In the end of the surah, Allah gives the pagans another chance to reflect on the opportunity they have to acknowledge the truth that the Prophet is teaching them through the Qur'an. Now is the time to prepare for the trials and accountability of the Hereafter. Anyone who waits until death to believe will find that it is too late, and they have reached the point of no return.

SURAH AL-FĀṬIR

Here, Allah continues building on the theme of the Day of Judgment that we came across in the last surah. Previously, Allah dismissed those arguments that the pagans believed could restrict Allah from resurrecting the dead. Now that these delusions have been addressed, Allah gives us deeper insight into His creation, and how He develops nature in the heavens and the earth.

Allah begins by declaring His complete control and mastery over everything in creation, challenging humanity to produce anyone – or any*thing* – that can provide for them like He does. He also warns us against following the path of disbelief like the devils and ignoring the Day of Judgment, which will be the reckoning for the sustenance that He has provided for us.

Allah reminds us of how comprehensive His abilities to sustain us are: from the winds that bring rain clouds, to the development of

humans from dirt and semen, the alternation of night and day, the water He sends to produce various vegetation, the mountains in their various colours, and the unique qualities with which He creates different humans and animals. All of these realities share the same principle: Allah develops things and sustains them, allowing them to multiply from within, without help from anyone.

After recognising these signs, the only way that a person can continue to disbelieve in Allah's mastery is by deliberately sealing their hearts from the truth. On the other hand, those who accept these truths prepare themselves for the inevitable reality that all of these signs point to: the Day of Reckoning. Allah describes the spectacle of that Day, where the believers enjoy their bliss of Heaven while the disbelievers wallow in the depths of Hell, pleading for forgiveness and another chance to correct their mistakes.

Therefore, Allah reminds humanity that the pattern of His creation does not change. Now that human beings know what to expect, they have the opportunity to prepare for the Hereafter, just as they prepare themselves according to the patterns of creation in this world. Allah has utter control over the very existence of creation, and the proof of that is in all the old nations that were once considered mighty but now no longer exist. Thus, disbelievers should not be fooled by the fact that Allah has not taken them to task yet; He is only holding back the Reckoning to give them time to repent. If they don't repent, however, their lives will act as a proof against them, and there will be no recourse once the Reckoning begins.

SURAH YĀ SĪN

In the previous surahs, Allah gives us extensive proofs and signs of the Day of Judgment. In Surah *al-Fāṭir,* He also mentions that

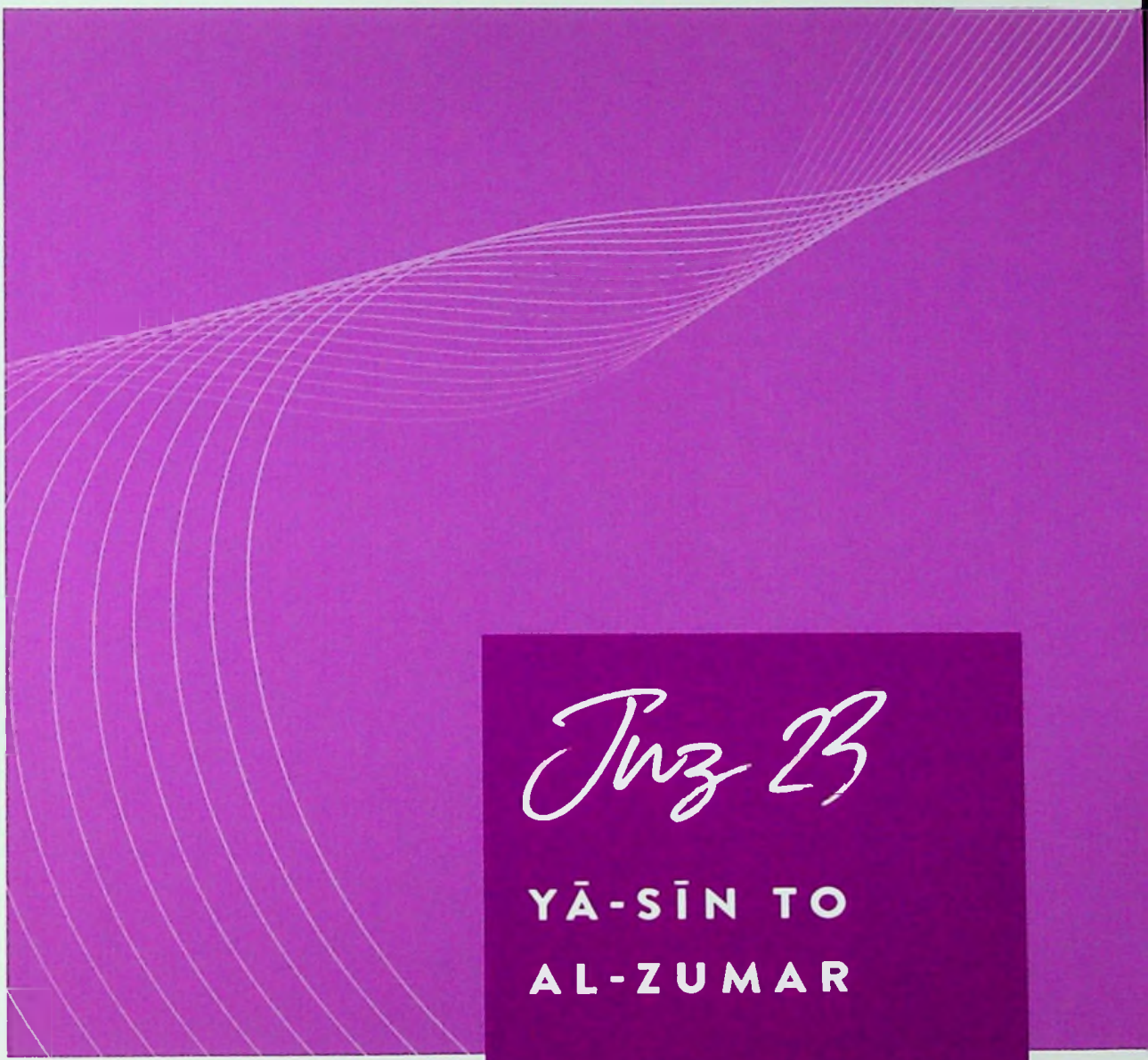
the disbelievers claim that they would believe in a message from Allah only if they had a real Messenger sent to them. Allah responds to this by addressing the heart of the matter: the legitimacy of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a Messenger, and how disbelievers lie to themselves about why they don't believe in him.

Allah introduces this topic by showing us how the opponents of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ have completely shut themselves off from using reason. If they really had any sincerity or belief in the unseen, they would have followed his guidance.

He gives us the example of the town to which He sent three Messengers. Not only were they given multiple Messengers to guide them, but they also had a righteous man from among the people of the town who testified to the validity of their message. Despite all of the guidance and reason that they received, the people of the town still rejected it. Not only did they reject the message, but they murdered the local man who accepted the Messengers. This story shows us that when people decide not to believe in Allah's message, it is simply out of their arrogance. Allah could send a nation multiple messengers with unique miracles at the same time, and that would do nothing but push the disbelievers further in their defiance.

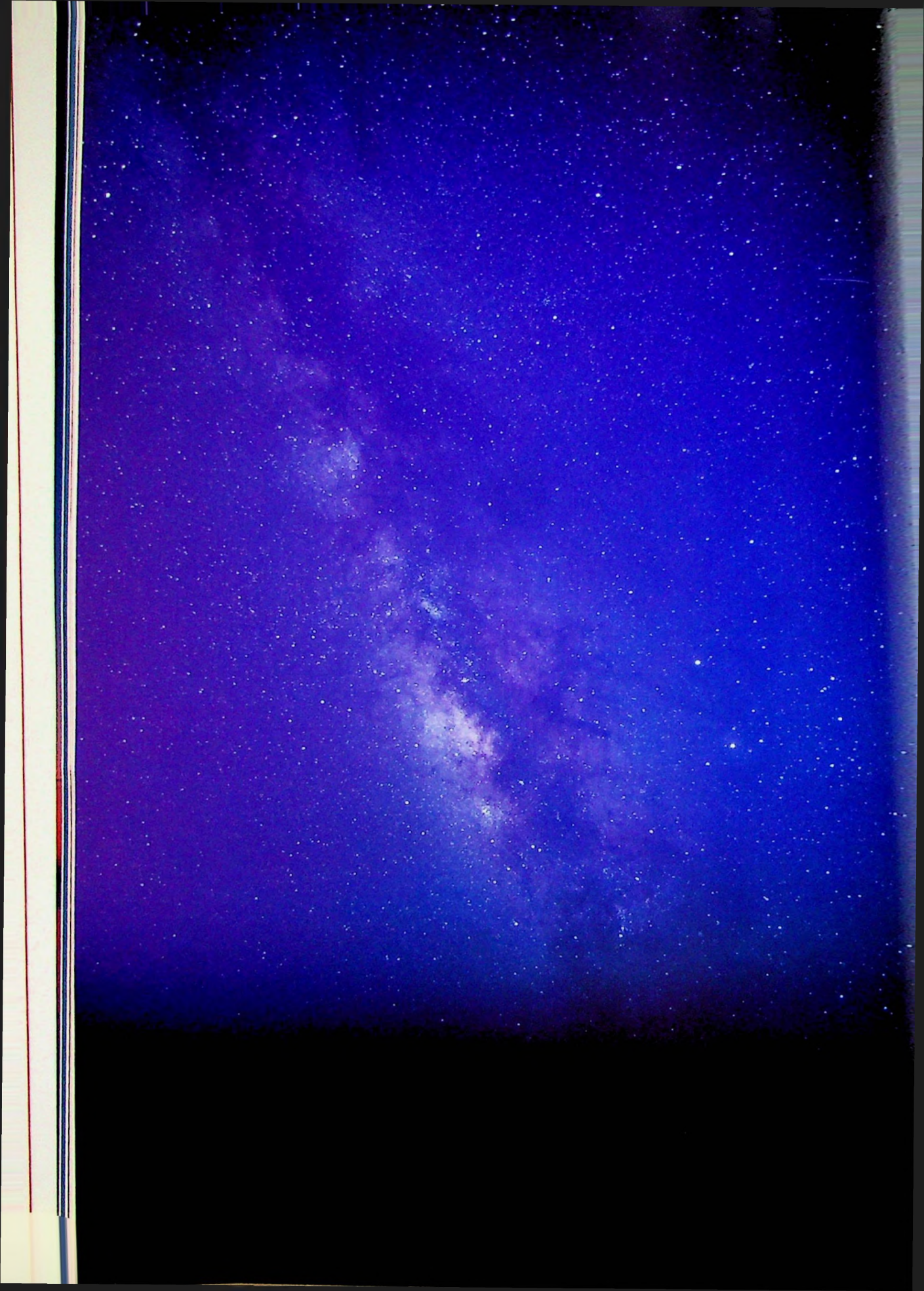
As for the believers who make sacrifices to spread the truth, they will find that their efforts will be graciously rewarded, and they will have no regrets for taking a stand for Allah in this world. Whatever they lose for Allah's sake now, will become insignificant when they see the reward Allah has in store for them as a result of their sacrifice; just like the man who was killed as we learned earlier in the surah.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Juz 23

YĀ-SĪN TO AL-ZUMAR



SURAH YĀ SĪN CONTINUED

While the beginning of Surah *Yā Sīn* gives general descriptions of disbelievers, believers, and an example of how adamant disbelievers can be, the rest of Surah *Yā Sīn* focuses on revealing the signs of Allah's power and His ability to create. He also gives us more insight on the trials of the Day of Judgment and the state of disbelievers therein.

Regarding Allah's signs, He gives us numerous examples of His creation. These include, but are not limited to, how He revitalizes the earth's water for our benefit, how He made everything in pairs to allow for reproduction, the courses of the Sun and the Moon, and the buoyancy of ships in water. All of these signs point to the fact that Allah has made this earth in a way that supports all the needs of humanity, and this unified purpose is due to the Oneness of the Creator. In fact, upon deeper reflection, one would realize that all of these favours that Allah has bestowed upon us must require some form of accountability that matches the magnitude of the favour. Allah did not create all of this for us so that we would reject His existence. Rather, He created it so that we may fulfil our purpose: to worship and serve Him. Failure to do that, or at the very least acknowledge that it is our true purpose, will result in a terrible outcome in the Hereafter.

This is why Allah follows these signs with a description of the state of disbelievers and believers in the Hereafter. The disbelievers will find themselves unable to justify their disbelief, as even their own limbs will testify against them. We know this is easy for Allah because He shows us that, at any moment, He can cause our limbs

to stop working. Similarly, the earth and environment itself could be changed so that it no longer works in our favour. If this happened, who would the disbelievers call to save them? Obviously, this proves that they have innate knowledge of Allah, but they refuse to acknowledge it. In the end, once they return to Him, they will have no choice but to accept His existence. Unfortunately, at that point, it will be too late.

SURAH AL-ṢĀFFĀT

In the end of Surah *Yā Sīn*, Allah concluded the theme of the nature of disbelief and declared His exaltedness above any of the false qualities they attribute to Him. Here, He continues to emphasize His exaltedness throughout Surah *al-Ṣāffāt*.

To demonstrate this, Allah starts by using examples that transcend the physical world. He reveals details of the angels, the origin of human creation, the repelling of the jinn from the heavens, the Day of Judgment, and the reality of Hell and Heaven. All of these unseen realities show that the disbelievers' infatuation with this world is short-sighted, and that their limited understanding of creation has made them think of Allah in ways that would be inconceivable if they knew how incredible the unseen world is. In fact, if they saw these realities, they would believe in Allah's attributes without a doubt. This is why Allah gives them explicit descriptions of the experiences that people can expect to face when they encounter that world. If they believe in this message and submit to the exalted reality of Allah, they would be saved from having to experience the Hereafter in a wretched state. Allah even reveals a conversation that the people in Paradise will have regarding disbelievers, who they used to know, when they see them in the depths of Hell, suffering unimaginable torment.

All of these punishments are avoidable if people take this message to heart and follow it. Allah gives us examples of those who saved themselves from this torment through the stories of the Prophets.

A number of Prophets are mentioned here, and all of these mentions demonstrate how Allah rewarded them for their dedication to Him, and how He punished those who opposed His message. Among this list, Prophet Ibrāhīm and Yūnus are described in the most detail. In the case of Prophet Ibrāhīm, Allah reveals a new story of how he patiently preached to his people and gave them extensive proofs of Allah's lordship over them, only to find them insistent on disbelief. Later, we learn of how he was tested with the command to sacrifice his son Ismāʿīl, and how the patience and trust both father and son had in their Lord transformed their sacrifice into a blessing. As for Prophet Yūnus, we learn that his humble submission to Allah's command and his repentance saved him from the belly of the whale. His people, too, believed and saved themselves from the punishment of Allah.

These stories reiterate what happens when a person comprehends the exaltedness of Allah and has certainty in the unseen world. Each of them will be at peace with Allah, and those who reject Him will be in torment.

Allah ends the surah by addressing the various false qualities that pagans attributed to Him due to their ignorance of the unseen world. Some believed the angels are daughters of Allah or that jinn are related to Him. Allah dismisses both of these notions and teaches us that every creation has its own station but none share His divinity with Him. Those who wish to be in an elevated state must embrace the knowledge that Allah gives them, embody it, and be rewarded with ultimate bliss. Those who follow their own desires will soon find everything Allah told them to be true.

Hence, Allah tells Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to do as the Prophets mentioned earlier did: leave the disbelieving people among his community to persist in their disbelief and learn about the unseen torment themselves when it arrives. Allah has promised victory to the Prophet as He gave victory to the Prophets before him. So long as he continues to uphold the message of Allah's perfection, he can expect peace from His Lord.

SURAH ṢĀD

In the previous surah *(al-Ṣāffāt)*, the pagans rejected the claim of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in being a Messenger. In *āyah* 168, Allah presents their claims of believing in Prophet Muhammad ﷺ if he brought them a reminder from the stories of the ancient Prophets. So Allah fulfils their request by presenting various stories of the Prophets. However, the pagans still struggled with the idea that Allah would choose a Prophet from among them as opposed to choosing one from the Jews.

Allah then narrates more stories about the previous Prophets. These stories specifically revolve around how He chooses Prophets in the way that He pleases, and bestows whatever blessings and miracles He wills upon them. Human beings have no say in the matter, rather they are obliged to accept His wisdom including the wisdom behind His choice of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a Prophet. Hence, Allah reminds Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to remain patient throughout his mission, regardless of what his opponents present to him. He supports this with additional details from the Prophetic stories to illustrate how the patience of Prophets was tested in the past.

Allah chose Prophets Dāwūd and Sulaymān, and although they were both given unique abilities to manipulate material things,

each of them was tested with temptations that were brought forth by his own people. In the case of Prophet Dāwūd, he was tested on his sense of justice and support for the oppressed. This test exposed him to a dangerous path: delivering a verdict without thoroughly investigating the claim first. As for Prophet Sulaymān, he was tested with extravagance and authority. This exposed him to being distracted from his responsibility towards Allah, that is, remembering Him according to the standards He has specified.

On the other hand, Allah tells us the story of Ayyūb who was not tested through abundance, but rather through deficiency. Through this we learn that deficiency has its own trials. In the case of Prophet Ayyūb, this test was his exposure to distress and difficulties.

Throughout all of these examples, we find that neither abundance nor deficiency are defining traits of being chosen by Allah. Rather, both of them come with their own set of trials. What is required is that the Prophets demonstrate patience in the face of the specific test that Allah has selected for them. This will be no different for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. These stories also highlight that, materially, Allah does not place His Messengers in any particular category. Therefore the authenticity of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ should be determined according to the content of his message and not based on the level of wealth he possesses.

Allah then shows us that when the pagans judge the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ according to worldly standards, they are following in the footsteps of Iblīs who judged Ādam according to his physical composition without considering the spiritual favour that Allah bestowed upon him. This is why Allah is sending the Prophet; to save people from such delusions. Nevertheless, if the disbelievers choose to follow the path Iblīs took, and use similar arguments to defend their actions, they will inevitably be led to the same destiny as him.

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SURAH AL-ZUMAR

As the Juz comes to a close, Allah speaks about His decree and the destinies of both those who accept His guidance and those who reject it. It is befitting for this surah to follow Surah *Sād* because, in that surah, Allah demonstrated how He decrees who His Prophets will be, as well as how they will be tested, and gives everyone a choice to accept His decree or face the consequences.

In this surah, Allah begins by addressing the arguments pagans use to justify why they associate partners with Him. He reiterates His absolute control over the universe and reminds them that only He decides who they should worship, especially since He is the one who created them and their sustenance in the first place.

That said, human beings can be fickle, and Allah shows us how this characteristic manifests in this surah. When we are afflicted with harm, we are committed to Allah, but as soon as we feel secure, we forget him and turn back to worshipping others besides him.

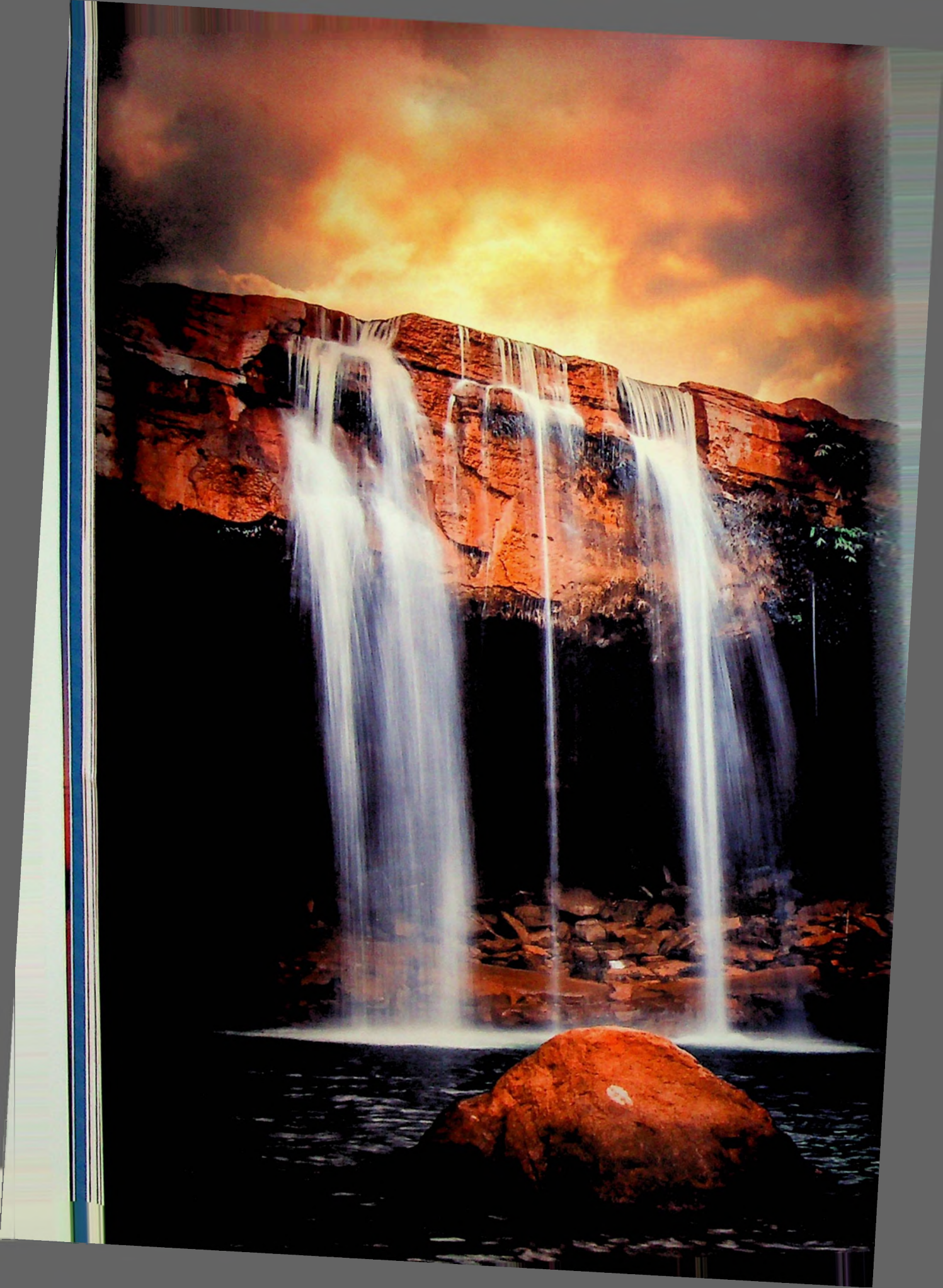
As we continue further into the surah, we learn how this fickle behaviour is counterintuitive because if human beings really wanted to keep themselves safe, they would remain dedicated to the only One with the power to protect them from harm. This is especially true considering Allah has informed us of a greater harm in the Hereafter, which He describes as an all-encompassing torment that is beyond imagination. So anyone who opts to ignore Allah in this life is deliberately putting themselves at an immense disadvantage in the next life.

Allah also provides elaborate descriptions of the status of the believers in Paradise, detailing its beauty and rewards in such a manner that no one would make a rational decision to deprive themselves of it. Nevertheless, Allah informs us that despite all of the descriptions of Heaven and Hell, the stories of the past ruined nations, and all the signs of Allah's attributes in the nature surrounding them, the disbelievers will still argue with the Prophet regarding the truth. In the end, Allah's decree will come to pass and they will be left to make their case before their Lord. But as we know by now, their arguments will be futile.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Juz 24

AL-ZUMAR TO FUSSILAT



SURAH AL-ZUMAR CONTINUED

At the end of the last Juz, Allah gave a detailed description of the blessings of Paradise and the torments of Hell. Continuing this theme, Allah begins this surah by teaching us what kind of people will reside in both of these places through descriptions of those who believe and those who disbelieve, respectively.

The primary difference between the two groups is that one lives their life lying to themselves about reality while the other lives according to the truth. Those who live with the truth accept the guidance they receive from Allah and follow it to the best of their ability. On the flip side, those who live their lives lying to themselves will acknowledge Allah's existence in some instances, but then reject Him when they feel secure from His punishment. Moreover, they feel disdain in their hearts when Allah is mentioned, but when lies about Allah are mentioned they become excited and happy.

Allah reminds humanity that even though we might not initially perceive it, He has full control over our life and death. He is the one who takes our souls when we fall asleep just as He takes our souls at the time of death. Allah then informs us that those who die lying about Him will do everything they can to save themselves from the punishment in the Hereafter. This is very different from the life of this world where Allah allows people to lie about Him when they are comfortable, then call upon Him when they are in need just to turn their backs on Him again after they receive what they were in pursuit of. This Divine mercy will not apply to them on the Day of Judgment. However, they will be so used to it that they will wish they could give Allah everything in the world to save them-

selves, just as they would rely on Him to save them from the trials of this life, even though they knew they would turn their backs to His guidance.

If Allah is telling us this now, we should know that making excuses to justify disbelief only prolongs an inevitable torment. So Allah invites disbelievers to turn back to Him, gives them clear instructions on how they can gain His mercy, allows them to come back to Him, and gives them an opportunity to save themselves from the punishment of Hell before it is too late. He describes the terrifying details of the Day of Judgment, and how their situation will be on the basis of their deeds. Those who gained the mercy of Allah in this world, through submission to Him, will have a favourable outcome while those who rejected Him will not find mercy from Him in the next. On that day, His decree will be final. For now, Allah has still given us a chance to prepare and for that, He is worthy of all praise.

SURAH GHĀFIR

Just the fact that Allah has given us time to repent in this world is an immense blessing. As we learned in the previous surah, no human being will want to be in an unfavourable position on the Day of Judgment. Since the forgiveness of Allah is essential for the salvation of humanity, Allah dedicates an entire surah to this attribute of His; naming it Forgiver.

Allah shows us in this surah that, not only is He the Forgiver, but He also made His creation with the natural predisposition to seek forgiveness for the believers. Even the great angels who carry the throne worship Allah by seeking forgiveness for those who repent to Him.

That said, for Him to be the Forgiver, He must also be capable of delivering punishment, as the act of forgiving would be meaningless if

punishment was never an option. Hence, Allah demonstrates early in the surah how He punishes disbelievers who insist on rejecting the truth and turn away from repentance. In the description of this torment, He shows us that their regret and pain will be so severe that they will plead to return to Earth to make things right. This surah leaves no doubts of the magnitude of Allah's ability to punish those He wills.

From there, Allah teaches us who will gain His forgiveness and who will be deprived of it by directing us to study the nations that have come before us. Here, Allah returns to the story of Mūsā, this time with new details of the dialogue between Mūsā and the Pharaoh. Allah shows how the Pharaoh had gone to extreme lengths to justify his disbelief and repress the truth. He even threatened to kill Prophet Mūsā and hoped to build a tower in an attempt to climb to the sky and prove Allah does not exist.

Another new detail that Allah reveals is a family member of the Pharaoh who had secretly believed and was attempting to advocate on Prophet Mūsā's behalf. It is clear he was seeking the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, and he implored his people to consider doing the same. He believed in the stories of the previous Prophets and warned the Pharaoh and his people of experiencing the same fate as those nations who were destroyed in the past for their disbelief.

In the end, we learn that Allah liberated Prophet Mūsā and his people from the Pharaoh, and He protected the believing relative of the Pharaoh from the harm that his community had intended. As for the Pharaoh and his followers, they became an example for future generations, representing those people whom Allah will not forgive. As we know from Volume 2 of this series, Pharaoh attempted to believe at the moment of his death, but Allah did not forgive him then.

In addition to explaining the different signs throughout history, Allah also points out the endless signs from His creation. Specifically, Allah mentions the animals He has blessed us with, the magnitude

of the creation of the heavens and the earth, the significance of the night and the day, and how the earth and sky are structured for our benefit. All of these signs point to Allah's existence and His right to be worshipped. Allah reminds us that He created us and that we will eventually return to Him. This reminder, in combination with the signs above, points to the fact that this life of ours was created for a purpose and that the Resurrection is just as real as everything else Allah has created around us.

If the lessons of history and the signs of nature were not sufficient to convince our hearts to seek His forgiveness, Allah reminds us of how terrifying His punishment will be. The Hellfire, the fetters and chains that people will be dragged with, the pleading of the dwellers of Hell that will be ignored, and their calls to their false gods to protect them: all of these descriptions should incite enough fear and remorse in people's heart to desist in their arrogance and pride, and instead humble themselves to seek His forgiveness.

As the surah approaches a close, Allah teaches us that He has sent many more Messengers to nations and most of their stories are unknown to us, but the lesson of all these stories is the same. Allah will always send clear proofs to convince humanity to worship Him and seek forgiveness. He will give them the answer to all of their problems and send His Messengers as the best role models, teaching their people how to attain Allah's forgiveness and mercy. He will give them years to reflect and argue with their Messengers. But when nations are more impressed with their own sense of limited knowledge, become proud of their sins, challenge Allah to bring the punishment to them, and harm the Messengers He sends to them, Allah will finally punish them severely, and when that begins, nothing can stop them from tasting the Reckoning. At that moment, they will be beyond the point where they can be forgiven.

SURAH FUṢṢILAT

When Allah gives signs of His decree and attributes, as He did in Surah *al-Ghāfir,* there is an expectation that humanity will recognize these signs and learn from them. Some people will excel in this regard, they are the ones whose hearts are sincere and their minds are open. But there are others who will fail to do so because they have closed their minds and locked their hearts from anything that is not in line with their lowly desires. Hence, Allah "spells out" His signs in intricate detail for those who wish to take heed, giving them all the tools and guidance they need to succeed in this life and the next, as well as the wisdom to seek forgiveness for their shortcomings.

The first signs in this surah are the details of how Allah created the heavens and the earth in a chronological order, showing just how infinite His knowledge and power is. He describes concepts that increase our faith as we scientifically discover the truths about the origin of the world that affirm the message of the Qur'an.

Allah then gives us the examples of people who, despite being warned of the power and might of Allah, still preferred to challenge Allah's power and suffer His wrath. These examples were the stories of ʿĀd and Thamūd. Despite their great physical strength, knowledge of engineering, and control over the mountains that was unmatched by any nation in human history, Allah made an example of them to show us how devastating his punishment can be for those who challenge His power. And He shows us that His dominance over disbelievers is not limited to this life, but it also extends to the next, where they will find that they do not even have control over their own skin if Allah commands it to speak against them on the Day of Judgment.

On the other hand, Allah gives us the example of people who follow the signs Allah gives them and stand for truth. They exhibit righ-

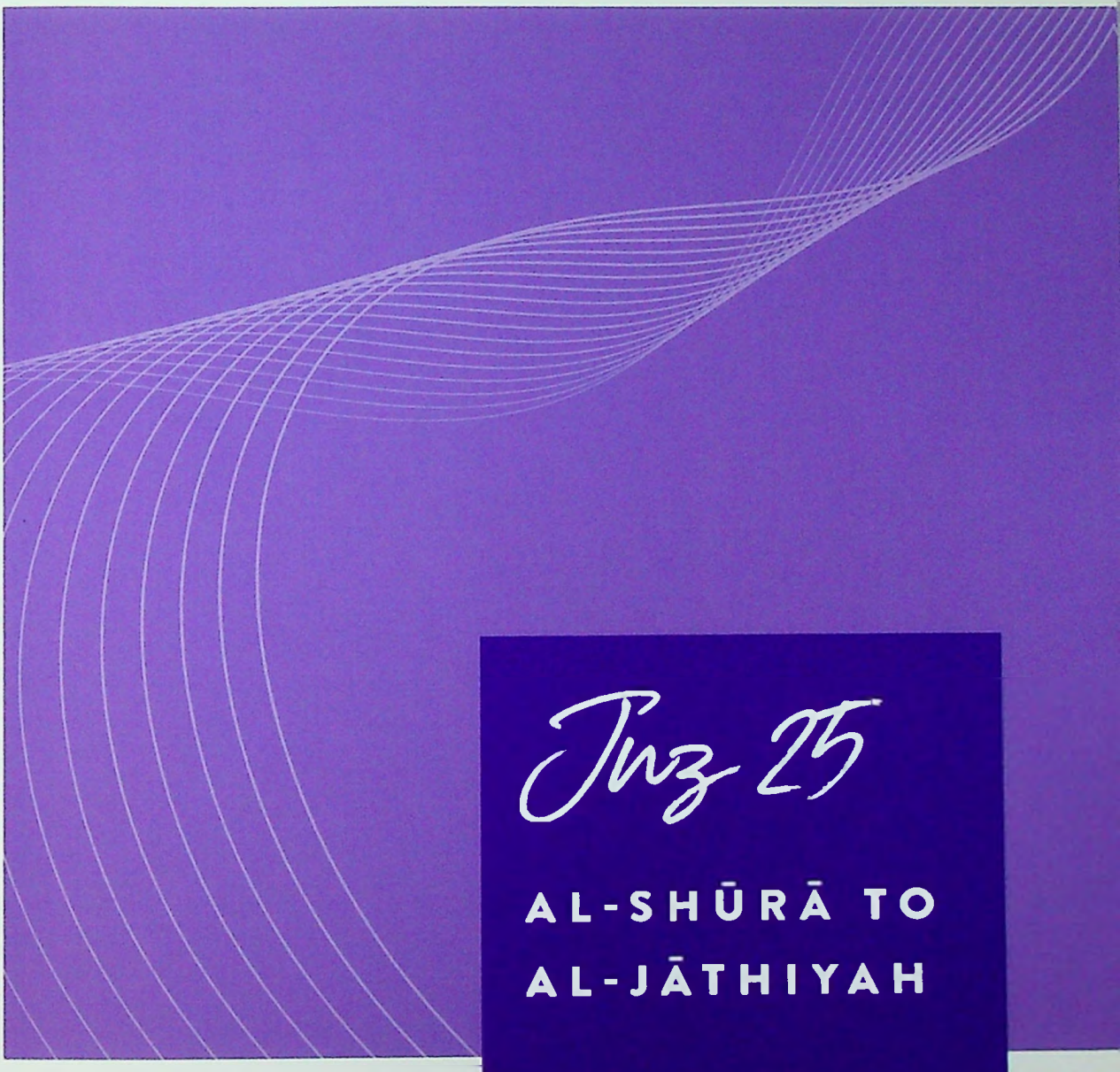
teous words and deeds, calling people to Allah, and thus, earn His protection in this life and the next. Unlike the punishment of ʿĀd and Thamūd, these people will be rewarded with comforts beyond imagination.

As the Juz comes to a close, Allah explains how clear this message is in its extensive signs, its lucid Arabic language, its penetrating logic, and its timeless lessons. Hence, there is no legitimate reason to disbelieve in it, and any argument that disbelievers use to oppose it has no basis in reason or nature. So whoever follows it will be doing themselves a favour. And anyone who denies it will only be denying their own benefit in this life and the next.

The surah ends by addressing the doubts that people have about meeting their Lord despite all the proofs He shows them, and despite the fact that they turn to Him when in dire need. Nevertheless, Allah will continue to give them signs that will allow them to see the truth. Hopefully, some will take heed to His message and prepare for their meeting with their Lord.

“Allah shows us that His dominance over disbelievers is not limited to this life, but it also extends to the next.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Juz 25

AL-SHŪRĀ TO AL-JĀTHIYAH

SURAH AL-SHŪRĀ

Allah has mentioned numerous times in the Qur'an that nations did not begin to differ or fracture except after knowledge came to them, and they misused it to gain power over each other. Hence, after all the signs and knowledge that Allah has given us in Surah *Fuṣṣilat*, which literally means "clearly spelled out," Allah now brings our attention to uniting upon truth once it has been made clear to us.

Allah makes it clear that if He wanted to force humanity to be completely united, then He would have made the circumstances to be that way, but that is not what the human being was created for. They were created to be given a choice and live with the consequences of their actions. So we have to decide to unite and work together to follow the truth. Some will correctly decide to unite on the truth while others will unite on various forms of falsehood.

Since this is the reality of the human condition, Allah starts this surah by relating the type of people who believers should not unite with in religion. Allah teaches believers that they must know that all the signs of the truth are manifest in the world, so they should not be deceived when they see disbelievers apparently getting away with the harm they are causing. Allah is just giving them time to let their decisions unfold, and they will eventually face their reckoning. In the meantime, the believers should avoid following the whims of disbelievers, lest they suffer the same fate in the Hereafter. Instead, believers should invest in the betterment of their Hereafter instead of this world, which results in success in both worlds.

As if to prove that these consequences are inevitable, Allah reminds us of the control He has over the essential aspects of human suste-

nance, like rain, the ocean, and the wind. When He promises the believers various forms of sustenance in the next world, we should have as much certainty in it as we do in the sustenance that we see He has given us in this world.

The way that we attain this sustenance in the Hereafter is by using the knowledge that Allah has given us to improve our state through prayer and consultation with the believers instead of transgressing over each other like the disbelievers. At the same time, we should also remember that the outcome of our efforts is purely based on Allah's decree. No matter how much effort we exert, or consultation we make, we should not be negatively affected by the apparent outcome if we truly believe in Allah. Instead, we should trust that He will do whatever is best for the believers. An example of this is acknowledging that bearing children who are boys, or girls, or both, or a lack of children altogether, are all gifts from Allah.

Similarly, Allah sends revelation to whom He wills as a means to guide humanity. Thus, we should follow it and accept the choice that Allah has made with regard to our Prophet, just as the Prophet has accepted us as the nation that he must guide to the straight path. He will not be responsible for us rejecting him, so if we want the favour of Allah and the assistance of His Messenger, we should unite under his banner and support each other in upholding the faith under his guidance.

SURAH AL-ZUKHRUF

In the previous surah, Allah spoke about the importance of uniting under the guidance of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and how we should work together and seek each other's assistance in staying on the straight path. He also instructed believers to resist following

the whims and arguments of the disbelievers or to shy away from the truth in order to unite with them.

In Surah *al-Zukhruf,* Allah gives us more detail about what would happen if He allowed the disbelievers to have their way. They would expel their Prophet, abandon his guidance, become more entrenched in disbelief, and unite the whole world on disobeying Allah.

Instead, Allah sent His Prophet with a clear Book that addresses all the arguments that disbelievers use to justify their disobedience. And He gives him the followers he needs to spread his message. Moreover, this message, unlike the messages of the past, is destined to defeat any falsehood that is placed against it, and this victory requires a level of worldly loss in order to keep the believers humble and more focused on the rewards of the Hereafter. Hence, the objective of the Prophetic mission is not to create a luxurious life in this world, but rather to facilitate a life that maximizes the luxuries in the next world. And Allah even explained to us that if He had given humanity too much luxury in this world, they would have united in complete disbelief and arrogance against Allah. Since Allah knows our nature, He has limited these material blessings out of His mercy in order for us to avoid diminishing our gains in the Hereafter. Yet, disbelievers don't appreciate this reality, and they insist on looking towards these worldly gains as the standard for truth and success.

Allah demonstrates how this happens through the story of Prophet Mūsā. Allah reveals a new part of the story that shows how the Pharaoh was not interested in the clear supernatural signs of Allah's power. He witnessed all the miracles that Allah mentioned in previous surahs, each one being greater than the next. Yet, he still disbelieved. His argument was centred around shallow worldly standards, such as Prophet Mūsā lacking eloquence in his speech,

“The life of the believer will always be better than the life of disbelievers, in this world and in the next.

the rivers that the Pharaoh owned in his kingdom compared to the poverty of Prophet Mūsā, and the fact that Prophet Mūsā lacked worldly status symbols like jewellery. So in the end, his people, like the people of Prophet Ibrāhīm and the people after ʿĪsā, all followed their desires instead of what the Prophet was preaching. In the case of the people of Ibrāhīm, they worshipped idols, while the people after ʿĪsā began worshipping him instead of Allah alone.

Unfortunately, their unity will only last in this world. In the next world, they will be enemies of each other, blaming each other for the torments that they will have to face. Meanwhile, the believers will be living a life beyond imagination as a consequence of the material sacrifices they made in this world in order to maintain their faith. In the end, all their sacrifices will become a blessing for them.

Allah tells the believers not to be too attached to convincing people who reject faith. If they prefer for their obsession with the insignificant pleasures of this world to blind them from the next, there is nothing that anyone can do to change that. The only thing that must be done is to share the truth with them, which is the believer's obligation, and let them decide for themselves.

SURAH AL-DUKHĀN

Previously, Allah has shown the Prophet that his obligation is only to deliver the message and leave it to Him to deliver the consequences of rejecting it. Allah now gives us Surah *al-Dukhān* to show us what happens when the people reject Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and His Book, and how He intervenes to bring victory to the believers.

Allah shows us that He brings the smoke as a sign for them to return to Him and seek His aid, but they return to disbelief once the trib-

ulation is removed. This is proof that these people are no different than the Pharaoh and his people who saw similar signs and behaved in similar ways. To make matters worse, they not only reject guidance, but they oppress and punish those who spread guidance and benefit in the world. Thus, they put themselves in a position where they must be destroyed in order for Allah to restore justice and harmony in the world. Hence, we see the punishment that was inflicted upon them, the believers were saved, and the disbelievers were left as a sign for those after them to take heed in Allah's message. Similarly, Allah will give victory to His Messenger regardless of whether his people believe or disbelieve. If they believe, they will reap the benefits of victory from Allah in this world, and the bliss of Heaven in the Hereafter. And if they disbelieve, Allah will ensure that they fail in this world and face an even greater disappointment in the Hereafter, with pain and suffering that can only be appropriately described by Divine revelation.

As the surah ends, Allah reminds us that this outcome is guaranteed, so all that is required of us is that we remain patient.

SURAH AL-JĀTHIYAH

Now that Allah has promised the Prophet clear victory over his opponents in this world, He brings us to Surah *al-Jāthiyah,* which will speak more about the outcome of disbelief in the Hereafter.

Yet again, we find that Allah shares numerous examples of His absolute control over the world, revealing how anyone with reason would be able to see that there is no escape from Allah's punishment. Therefore, the only conclusion that can be made is that disbelievers who hear and see these signs refuse to use the eyes, ears, and mind that Allah gave them, thereby blinding themselves from

the truth and ignoring it altogether. This happens because they prefer worshipping their own ego and desires instead of worshipping Allah and submitting to His guidance. In their minds, their life would be better this way.

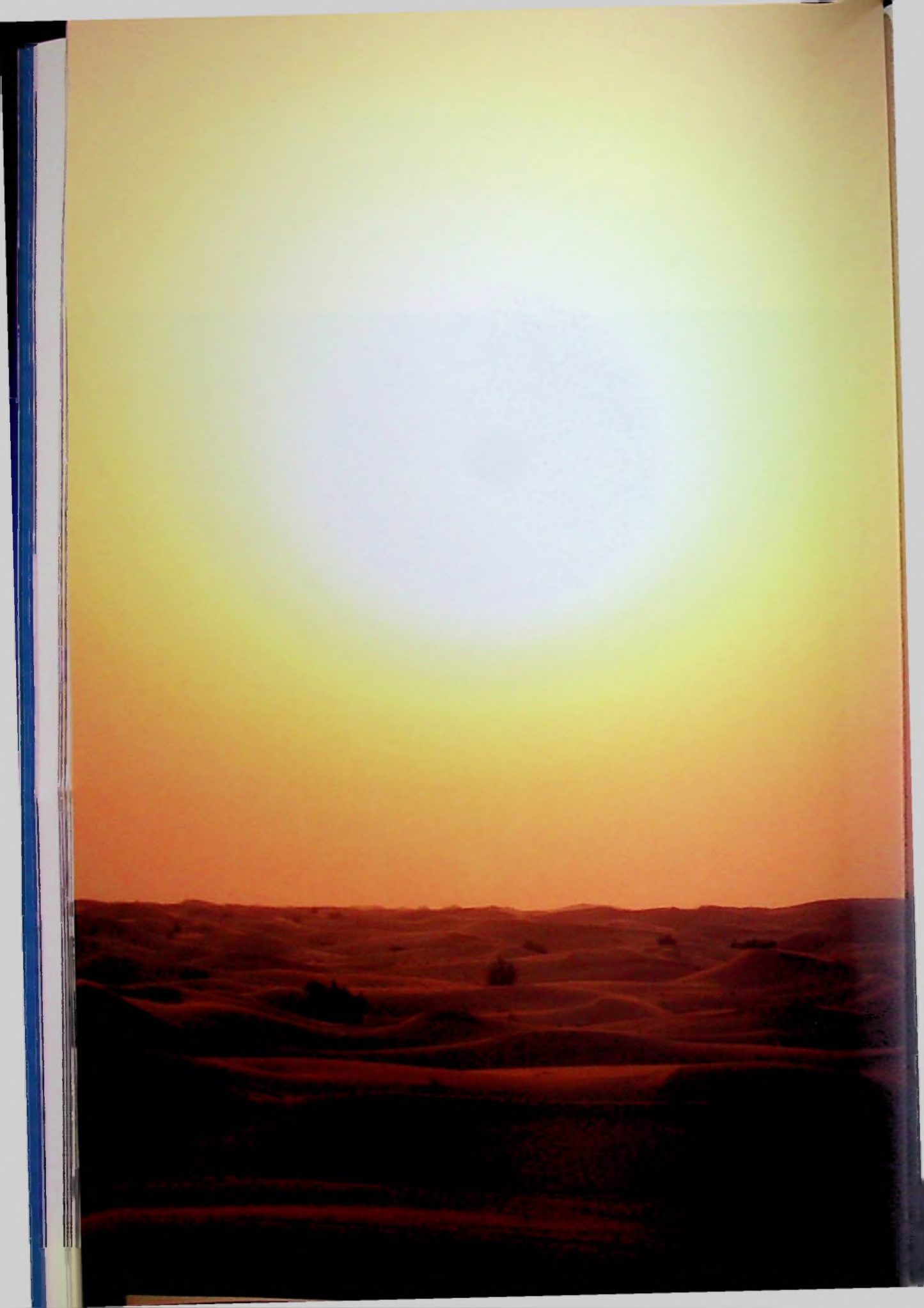
Yet, Allah promises them that this strategy will fail them because, to Allah, the life of the believer will always be better than the life of disbelievers, in this world and in the next. Unfortunately, the disbelievers will never perceive this concept due to their arrogance.

Nevertheless, Allah demonstrates in this surah that this deliberate blindness will only be temporary. On the Day of Judgment, the sheer magnitude and terror of Allah's display of power will be so overwhelming that none of them will have a choice but to submit to it and acknowledge its truth. Allah shows us that, at that point, the disbelievers will realize how much they wronged themselves by rejecting Allah's message. They will be full of regret to the point that they would wish they could go back and make up for what they did in order to avoid the punishment. Yet, their pleading will be of no avail. By that point, the deeds have been recorded, and thus, the punishment must commence, justice must be served, and Allah's promise must be fulfilled.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Juz 26

AL-AHQĀF TO AL-DHĀRIYĀT



SURAH AL-AḤQĀF

In the previous Juz, Allah spoke about how disbelievers follow their desires over their knowledge, and how this will lead them to an inevitable punishment. In this surah, Allah transitions to a warning of how imminent the punishment is for those people who disbelieve in the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Allah appeals to reason in this surah, proving to the pagans that they are not the first to exhibit this behaviour and that they will suffer the same punishment as the people who opposed their Prophets in the past. Even some of the elite Jews and Christians whom the pagan Arabs looked up to as people of religious wisdom, acknowledged the truth of this message just like they acknowledged the messages before their time.

Allah demonstrates how irrational disbelief is by using the example of a child who is raised by parents. One possible scenario is that the child grows up and is thankful to Allah for the blessing of having parents who took care of him. On the other hand, a person could take the opposite approach and deny the fact that Allah gave him this blessing of having parents while his parents pray to Allah that he accepts reality before it is too late. If he dies denying Allah's blessings, He will have to answer for his arrogance.

Another example of this irrational behaviour is found in the people of ʿĀd who actually asked for Allah's punishment despite all the proof of its reality that was given to them by their Prophet. And once the punishment came, they were in such a deluded, complacent state that they were happy to see it arrive because they thought

it would be a blessing! Allah even shows us that there are jinn that have more sense than these disbelievers who refuse to believe in Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This proves that the disbelievers cross all boundaries in their denial, to the extent that even the obvious signs and rational proofs have no effect on them. it will only be a matter of time before they will receive a hard reality check. So Allah reminds the Prophet to remain patient as his opponents will meet their demise much sooner than they think.

SURAH MUḤAMMAD

In Surah *al-Aḥqāf,* Allah promised the opponents of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that they will face Allah's decree in due time. Now, through this surah, Allah delivers on His promise.

Surah *Muḥammad* is a surah that opens the doors of military resistance for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This is of great significance because this system, which gives Prophet Muhammad ﷺ the ability to fight his enemies, replaces the usual, supernatural punishment that Allah delivers to disbelieving nations like those that have been mentioned before. In other words, Allah has promised the opponents of the Prophet that they will meet their demise, and in this surah, He instructs the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to deliver that demise himself in the form of war. Most of the Prophets before him suffered at the hands of their enemies without retaliating, but the result was in their favour and the enemies suffered a terrible torment. This time, Allah's punishment will be different in two ways. Firstly, the torment is being delivered at the hands of a merciful Prophet, so there will be less casualties than there were in the past. Secondly, the enemies who are already destined to be punished by Allah will die directly at the hands of those who they used to op-

press, which gives the believers a sense of justice in this world and puts their hearts at ease.

That said, Allah knows that fighting will expose the believers to death as well, and for this reason, Allah gives them peace of mind by promising them Paradise and showing them that what they look forward to is far better than what they leave behind. He also knows that fighting is the last thing that the hypocrites would like to engage in, considering they do not believe in Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to begin with. So Allah describes them in elaborate detail, exposing their feelings, thoughts, and statements, giving us all but their physical features.

In the end, Allah promises the believers that they will either gain worldly victory over their enemies, or they will gain victory by going to Paradise, a far better option than the former. The only requirement is that they obey the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and trust his guidance. As we will see in the next surah, Allah gives them the immediate reward of that trust.

SURAH AL-FATḤ

Allah delivers His victory to the believers in this surah. It was initiated by the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah and, consequently, was the tipping point for the message of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to be spread freely without fear of opposition. This ultimately would lead to the conquest of Makkah itself, the reestablishment of Islam in the Kaaba, and the permanent removal of idols from the *masjid*.

The surah centres our focus on the blessing of knowing and following Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The believers' pledge and oath to him will result in a tremendous reward. As for the hypocrites who

Allah promises the believers that they will either gain worldly victory over their enemies, or they will gain victory by going to Paradise.

always doubted the Prophet, they will not reap the benefits of following him, and they will have to prove themselves by repenting or eventually meet the same fate as the Prophet's enemies on the Day of Judgment.

The believers will find that, after all the suffering they faced in Makkah and all the sacrifices they made in Madinah, Allah will reward them with bounties in this life and in the next. Their enemies will fear them, and Allah will place tranquillity in their hearts. Moreover, Allah has described them in the revelations of the past, crystalizing their characteristics in history as well as the future, thereby making them among the most elite believers after the Prophets. They are the ones with the closest relationship to Allah and the highest rewards in Paradise.

SURAH AL-ḤUJURĀT

While Surah *al-Fatḥ* gives the details of the victory of the followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ over their enemies, Surah *al-Ḥujurāt* gives them advice on how to overcome the hypocrites and rebels among them. Allah also gives instructions on how to safeguard their relationship with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, which will ensure their salvation in this life and the next.

Allah teaches the believers the specific etiquettes of how to speak and conduct themselves around Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This behaviour distinguishes them from the hypocrites who blatantly disrespect the Prophet. He also teaches the believers how to protect themselves from the rumours of instigators that can create disunity among them, as well as how to resolve armed conflicts that arise between them in the event that the unity weakens.

To further prevent conflict between the believers, Allah teaches them that they are like brothers, and should deal with each other as such; recognizing that they are as one body and their reputations are sacred to one another.

Lastly, Allah reminds them that He has done them a favour by sending them Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, not the other way around, so the Prophet does not owe them anything for following him. Rather, they should be grateful for being part of the nation of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the opportunity to be among those who are close to him and believe in him. As we will learn in the next surah, Allah knows their belief better than anyone else so they should do their best to be sincere in their belief.

SURAH QĀF

Building on the theme of belief, Allah addresses the doubts that the disbelievers – as well as the hypocrites – have with regard to the message of the Qur'an.

He begins by citing examples of His power over the sky and the earth, and how He has made nature work to serve humanity. He also uses the earth to demonstrate how He brings life to that which is dead just as He will on the Day of Resurrection.

He then reminds us of people in the past who denied this, despite the fact that they had no rational basis to do so. Their doubts are well-known to Him because He has angels recording every moment of their life and every word that they say. Allah also reveals how this denial will not serve them after their death as they will argue with their devils and try to find a way out of their punishment.

The stark reality is that, at that point, there is nothing that anyone will be able to do to change their fate. All that will be left is for them to receive the judgment for what they have done in this world. Those who believed in Allah and His Messenger will reap the best rewards while those who persisted in arrogant denial will finally face the undeniable truth that they were looking for, manifested in the form of the Hellfire.

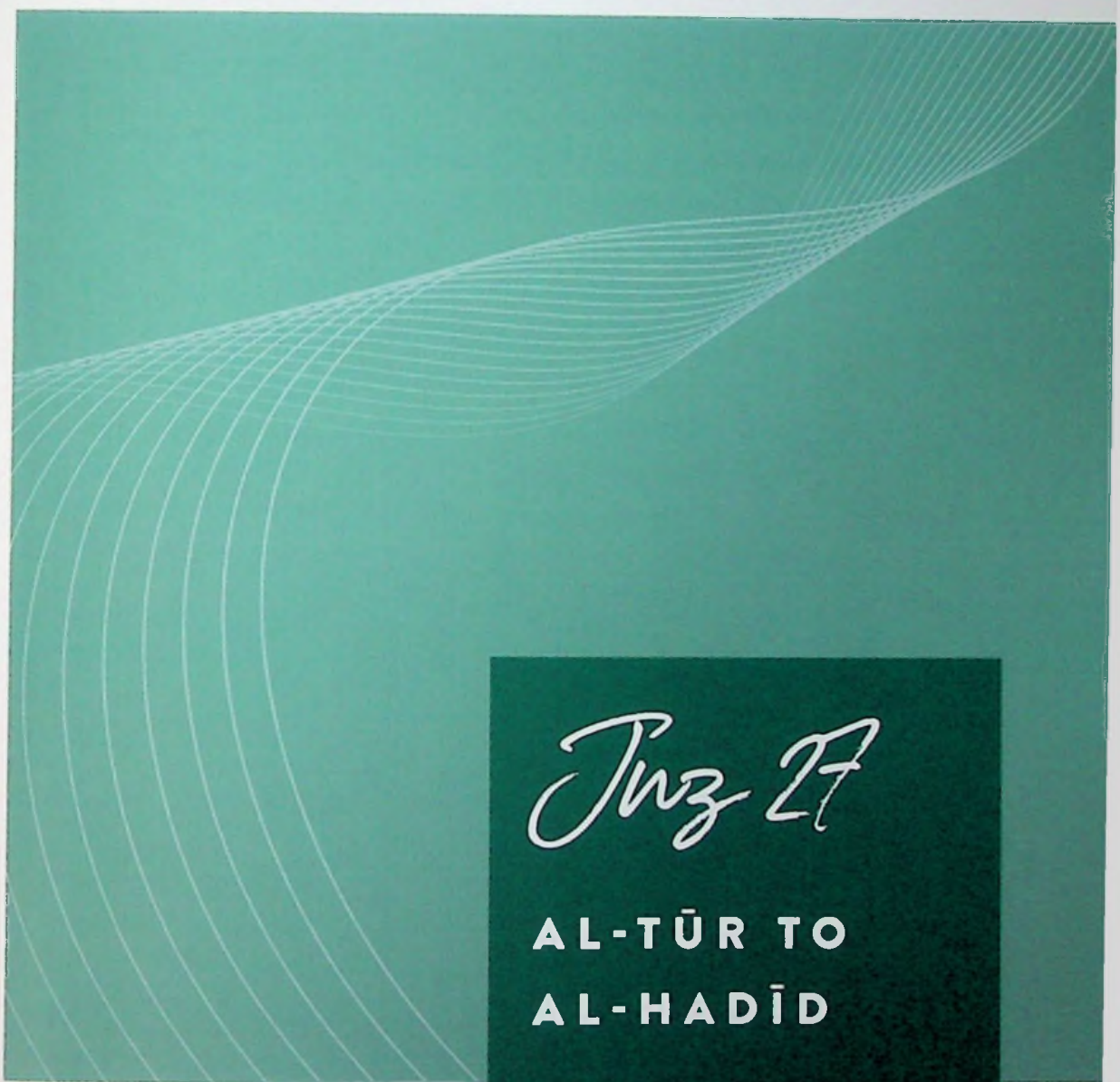
Allah makes it clear that the entire affair of the Day of Judgment will be easy for Him, and therefore, the Prophet should not worry about the audacity of the disbelievers as He will ensure justice is served in the Hereafter.

SURAH AL-DHĀRIYĀT

In the last surah, Allah shows us how meticulously our deeds are recorded, how the Angel of Death comes to take souls, and how the end of our paths will either be Heaven or Hell.

This surah gives us a sense of urgency regarding the arrival of Allah's judgment. Allah gives us a straightforward ruling of how the people who lie about the Prophet will be definitively reprimanded, and how the righteous will be rewarded, as well as descriptions of how both groups behave in this world.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Juz 27

AL-ṬŪR TO AL-ḤADĪD

SURAH AL-ṬŪR

Allah used the last surah to warn the disbelievers of His punishment. Now in Surah *al-Ṭūr,* He affirms that this punishment is about to take place. This is one of the consistent themes that we will find throughout the surahs toward the end of the Qur'an. Since the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the last Prophet to be sent to humanity before the Hour, Allah reveals numerous surahs that drive home the imminence of the Day of Judgment and give us detailed descriptions of it, as well as the groups mankind will be divided into on that Day. There will be those who have the favour of Allah, and they will be enjoying a wide range of blessings as a result of their sacrifices and trust in Allah. On the other hand, we learn that the disbelievers will be suffering in an inescapable torment.

One of the points that stands out here is that the believers who were saved describe themselves as people who had a deep concern for their families' spiritual wellbeing and were regular in making *duʿāʾ*. These are the kinds of details that give us strategies for success on that day.

Another characteristic of this surah is the direct questioning that Allah uses. He asks the disbelievers rhetorical questions leaving them to admit the answers themselves. This line of questioning is meant to lead a person to admit the truth to themselves. Allah knows that they are aware of the truth, and these questions will expose that. In the end, if they answer these basic questions truthfully and still do not believe in this message, they have no one to blame but themselves when they are punished in the Hereafter for their persistent disbelief.

SURAH AL-NAJM

In the last surah, Allah highlighted the claim of the Quraysh that the Prophet made up the Qur'an, implying that it his own words. In this surah, Allah compares the belief of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ against the belief of the pagans.

Allah describes how Prophet Muhammad ﷺ ascended to the Heavens and witnessed the full evidence of Allah's existence. On the other hand, what the disbelievers worship are mere stones that they have given names to. Allah describes the angels as powerful beings that fulfil His commands while the disbelievers trivialize them. He teaches us the extent of His power and control over humanity, and how this control has been demonstrated through all the well-known disbelieving nations in the past. He destroyed them entirely, sparing no disbeliever from the punishment. These were nations that the Arabs themselves knew to have existed, and some of their ruins, such as the homes of Thamūd, can still be visited to this day.

All of these things prove that the pagans had no historical, logical, or even experiential grounds for their disbelief. In contrast, the message of the Qur'an rains down proof after proof and indisputable claims of Allah's authority that no other can claim. This leaves no doubt whatsoever in the promise of Allah's judgment. Therefore, Allah warns them that time is running out, and if they have any sense, they should submit and worship Him while they still have the opportunity.

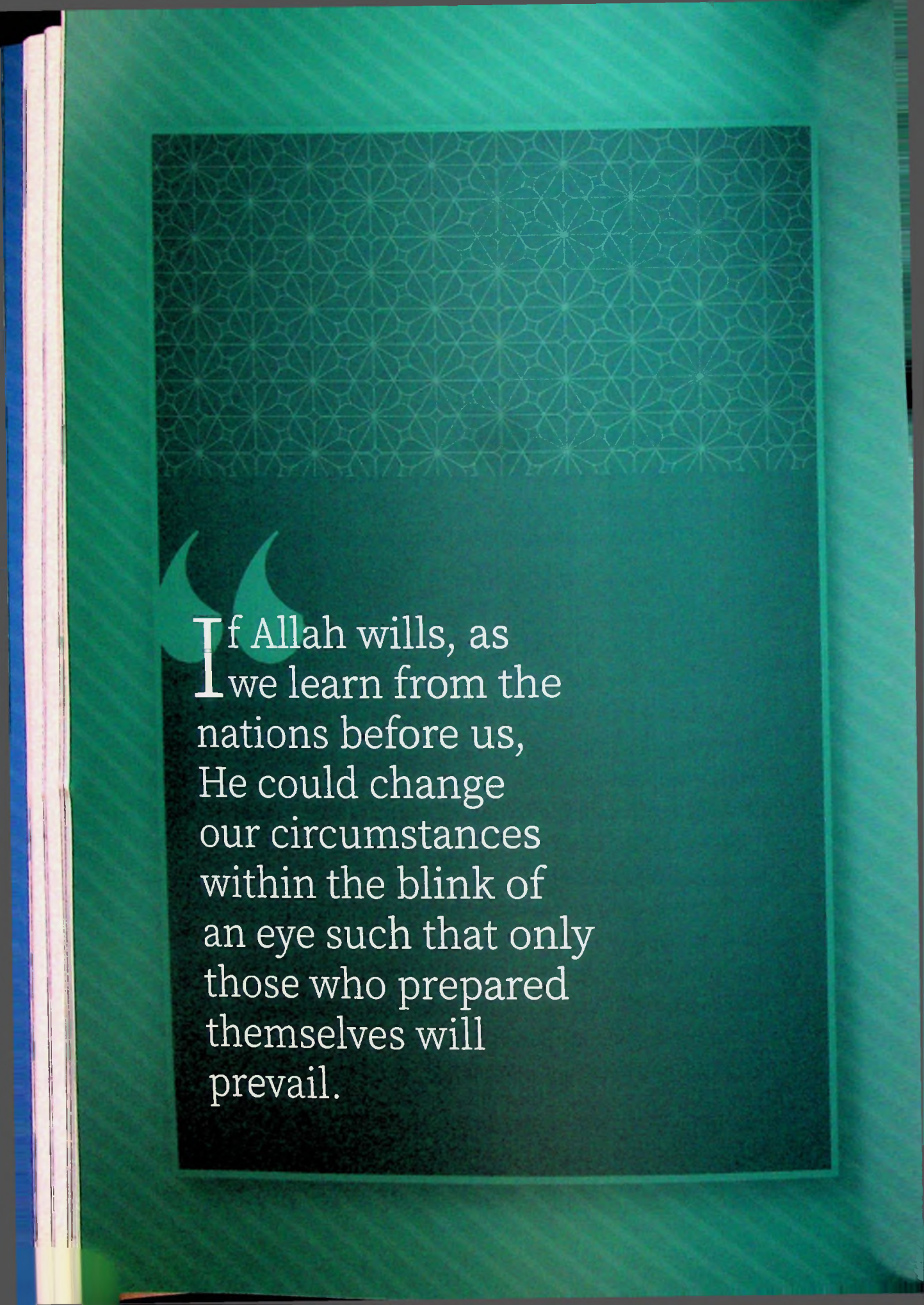
SURAH AL-QAMAR

Once again, we are reminded of the signs of the Day of Judgment, but unlike in Surah *al-Najm,* this time, Allah expounds on the stories of the previous nations who disbelieved in it.

Although Allah has repeated the stories of these Prophets throughout the Qur'an, in this surah, He elaborates on the events leading up to the punishments and gives specific details as to how each of these nations were punished. This further indicates Allah's ability to deliver on His promise of the Day of Judgment. In fact, these examples of Allah's reckoning are minor manifestations of the greater reckoning of the Last Day. It is as if the Day of Judgment does not start at the end of the world, but rather at the end of a person's life.

One characteristic of this surah that stands out is the repeated statement, "And indeed, We have made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember?" This statement emphasizes the fact that there is no excuse for a person to forget the message of the Qur'an. The recitation of it is easy for a person to learn; a non-Arab can memorize it just as easily as an Arab. Moreover, the Qur'an is a book that is recited and does not even require one to know how to read or write. All a person has to do is repeat the statements that are dictated to them. It is widely available to everyone and recited at least seventeen times a day in *ṣalāh*. It is written in books to enable it to be reviewed and studied and has been explained in detail from the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ until today. Ultimately, one is not left with any excuse to not know its monotheistic teachings, its miracles, its warnings and promises as well as its prophecies. The only reason that a person would not remember it would be due to deliberate ignorance, and not due to a lack of access.

In conclusion, just as the nations of the past received their fair share of warnings from their Prophets and doubted the possibility


If Allah wills, as we learn from the nations before us, He could change our circumstances within the blink of an eye such that only those who prepared themselves will prevail.

of a reckoning, we too have received an abundant amount of warnings through this Qur'an. There should not be a single doubt left in any reader or listeners' mind regarding the fact that Allah's promise is real. And that if He wills, as we learn from the nations before us, He could change our circumstances within the blink of an eye such that only those who prepared themselves will prevail.

SURAH AL-RAḤMĀN

While Surah *al-Qamar* gives us graphic detail of Allah's punishment, Surah *al-Raḥmān* gives us extensive details of His blessings and rewards. This is a direct extension of the last āyah of Surah *al-Qamar.*

One of the most obvious themes in this surah is established in the recurring statement, "So which of the favours of your Lord would you deny?" Throughout this surah, Allah lists blessing after blessing and sign after sign, enumerating various means through which His mercy has manifested upon humanity. Allah goes from speaking about the way He created nature, to the spectacle of the Day of Judgment, to the experiences that awaits the people of Heaven and the people of Hell.

Among all of these signs, Allah challenges humanity as well as the jinn – which is relatively rare in the Qur'an – to deny any of the blessings that He has given us. The fact is, even if people refuse to believe that these blessings are from Allah, they cannot change this reality. Such straightforward questioning places full responsibility on the reader to decide what kind of relationship they want to have with their Creator based on the response that they give to Him.

As for Allah, He makes it clear what kind of relationship He has with us, and that is one of mercy. He has already proven His mercy through the myriad of examples that He has shown us. Just the

mere fact that He has given us the ability to communicate clearly is a sufficient sign to prove how merciful He is. In addition, He gave us the Qur'an with guidance that solves all problems that human beings will face in this life and in the next. After reading this surah, one should be cleared of all doubts about the mercy of Allah and appreciate His willingness to embrace our repentance and raise us to the highest levels of Paradise.

SURAH AL-WĀQIʿAH

Now that Allah's punishment and mercy have been established in the last two surahs, Allah brings us to the different levels that people will be at on the Day of Judgment, which will determine what their outcome will be.

People will be divided into three groups: those who are foremost in their efforts to serve Allah, those who are average, and those who are misguided deniers of the truth. Each of them will get a reward that is appropriate to their status.

Allah also explains how He is the One who provides the four core components of life: reproductive fluids, agriculture, water, and fuel. He challenges us to find anyone who can produce these things on their own if Allah were to take them away from us. Moreover, He declares that our lives are more dependent on Him than on our own jugular veins.

This again proves to humanity that Allah is to be worshipped alone. He is able to provide all the enjoyments that He promises us in the Hereafter just as He provides these core elements to all people in this life. So He alone deserves to be glorified and praised.

SURAH AL-ḤADĪD

Building on the theme from Surah *al-Wāqiʿah,* Allah describes how people enter into the particular categories mentioned in the last surah.

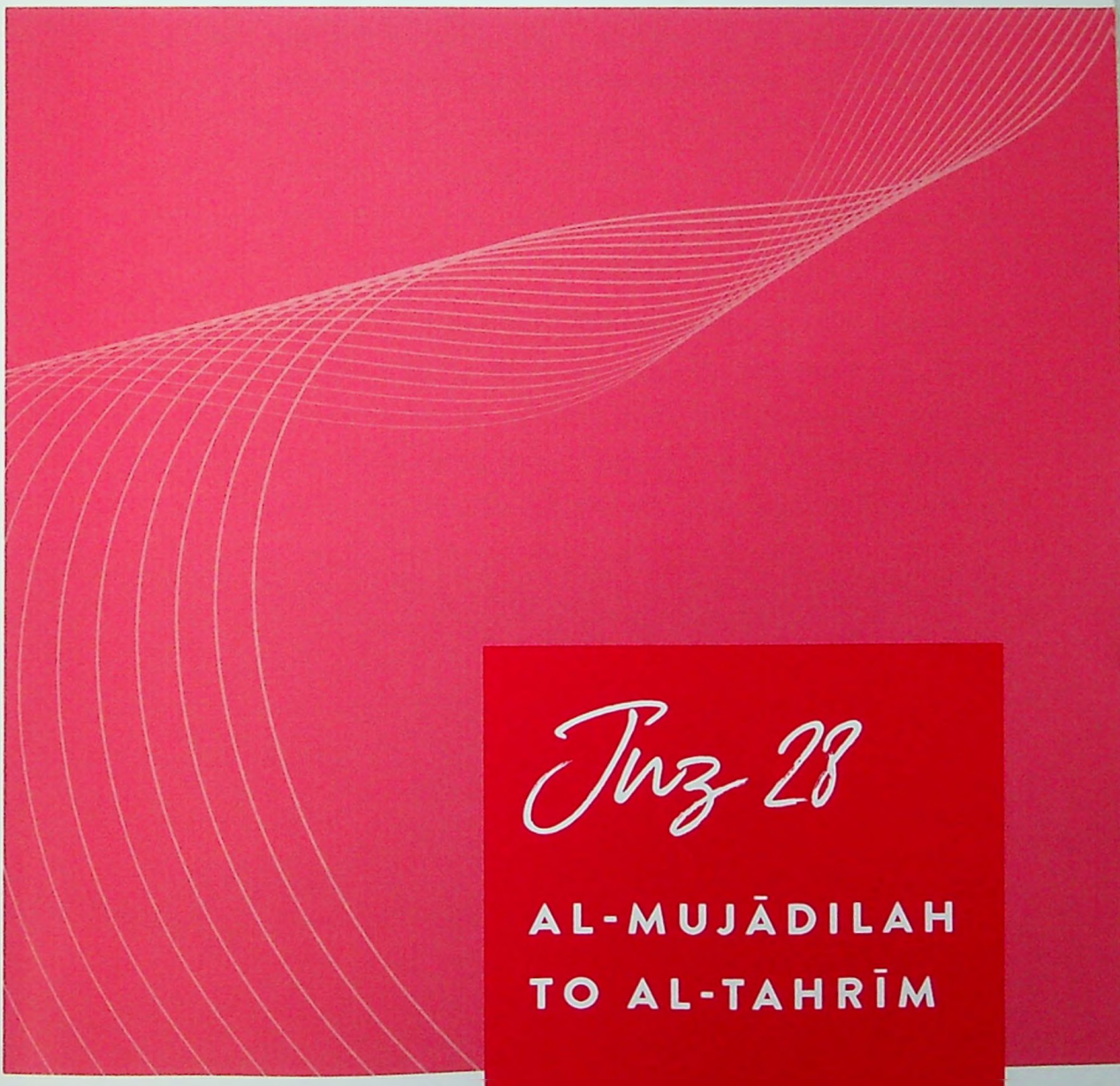
Allah begins the *āyāt* giving detailed descriptions of His absolute control of what happens in the heavens and the earth. Therefore, He has ultimate authority to choose whom He wills in order to guide people to Him, and the people should follow His chosen Messenger. Those who follow him and make sacrifices for Allah's sake will find a light to guide them in the Hereafter, just like the light of guidance they followed in this world. Likewise, those who harboured disbelief will find themselves without light.

The reason people disbelieve is due to their obsession with material things, and this is why Allah addresses the true nature of worldly things. All of it is temporary, and all of it is decreed. Thus people of faith should not be emotionally moved by their losses or gains in this world because they have no real control over them.

In the end, the most important characteristic that should concern a person is proving their commitment to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; spending their wealth to support his cause and defending him and assisting him with their lives. If they fulfil their obligations to Allah, they will not only have a light in the Hereafter, but also a light in this world, and that is how a person can be favoured by Allah. No one has control over whom receives His favour except Him.

Once again, He uses the Prophets as examples; juxtaposing the abundant generosity and reward of Prophet Ibrāhīm to the punishment of the people of Lūṭ. Similarly, Allah cites examples of powerful nations in history who were destroyed, like the Pharaoh and people of ʿĀd, showing that no one can escape from the punishment of Allah once it is decreed no matter how strong they are perceived to be. In the end, Allah returns to reminding us of our purpose in this world – to worship Him – and instructs us not to follow the sins of those in the past, so that we can be fully prepared for the inevitable Reckoning that is at our doorstep.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Juz 28

AL-MUJĀDILAH TO AL-TAHRĪM

SURAH AL-MUJĀDILAH

In the previous surah, Allah sends a clear message that not everyone will earn the favour of Allah, and that He decides upon whom He will bestow His blessings and who will receive His punishment. However, what happens when people have nowhere else to turn? Will Allah be there for those who turn to Him? Or will He dismiss anyone who asks for His favour? This surah answers these questions.

Those who seek out Allah and His Messenger to solve their problems can rely on Allah and His Messenger to save them. This surah proves that one of the signs of Allah's favour upon a person is that their heart seeks answers from Allah and turns to Him when they are in need. These are the people who are considered people of Allah.

As for those who scheme among themselves and make plots to sin and deceive the believers and the Messenger, they are people who have been overtaken by the devil and are far from Allah's favour so long as they continue to rely on the devil as their guide.

In the end, the people of Allah will prevail, and Allah will assist them against anyone who opposes the Messenger, regardless of how closely related they might be. Moreover, Allah promises that those who were true to their commitment to Allah will be given Paradise, as described in the previous surahs.

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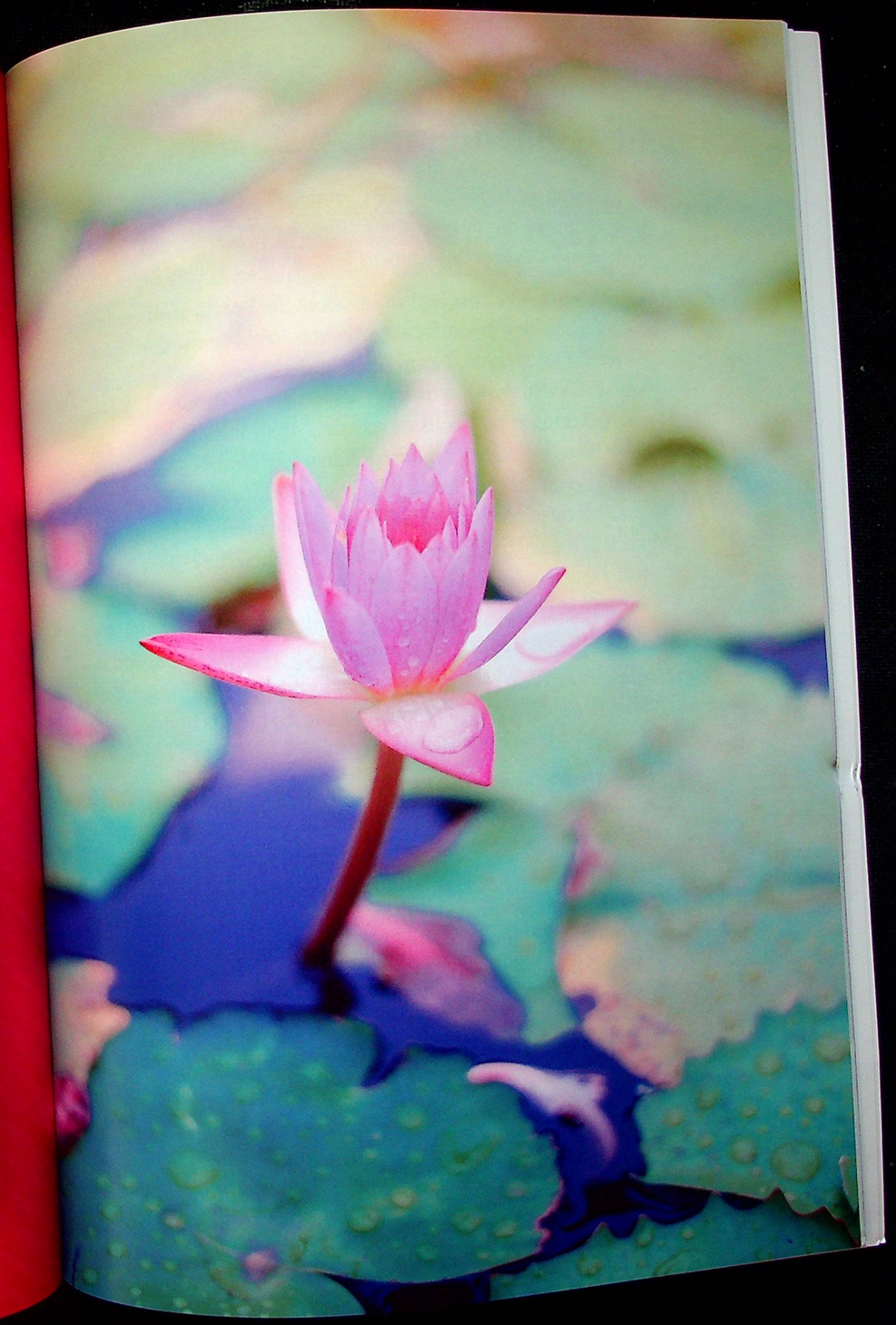


SURAH AL-ḤASHR

In Surah *al-Mujādilah* Allah promised that the believers will prevail over the people who follow *shayṭān*, and Surah *al-Ḥashr* demonstrates how this happens through the Battle of Banū Naḍīr.

Allah teaches us how He instils fear in the hearts of His enemies, thereby making it easy for the believers to overcome them and deliver the justice that they deserve for betraying the Messenger of Allah. He also shows us how the Messenger of Allah is further supported through the spoils of war that Allah has given him rights over thereby enabling a more equitable distribution of wealth. This is important because, in the past, the wealthy were in much better positions to participate in war. They had the means to gather equipment and men to fight in battle through which they earned access to the spoils. Meanwhile, the less fortunate people, such as the poor and orphans, would be at a natural disadvantage. They would struggle to participate in wars due to their lack of preparation, and as a consequence, would be left out when the spoils were divided. So Allah gives the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ the first rights to these spoils so that he may distribute it to those who are in dire need.

There are people whom Allah speaks of who would give to their brothers in need even if they themselves were in dire straits. But at the same time, the community also has hypocrites who have miserly dispositions. If it were left up to them, no one else would have access to the wealth that was pouring into the community as a result of the successful campaigns, nor would they go out and fight to protect the Prophet. Allah emphasises that these two groups – believers and disbelievers/hypocrites – are not the same.

Lastly, Allah reminds the believers that their Lord has all the most beautiful attributes and that he has given them the Qur'an which, when invoked, brings them bounties that are incomparable to anything that their enemies can hope to achieve in this world.

SURAH AL-MUMTAḤINAH

In this surah, Allah teaches the believers that their faith will be tested through their family and tribal allegiances, and that they must prefer their allegiance to Allah, His Messenger, and the believers over all other relationships. This is an appropriate follow-up to the previous surah, which spoke about the hypocrites choosing the disbelievers over the believers as their guardians.

Allah explains to us that the best model to follow is not the model of the people who reject guidance, but rather the way of Ibrāhīm and the way of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Following their way can eliminate the enmity that some believers might naturally feel in their hearts towards their former enemies, from the days of ignorance, who are now Muslim.

Then, Allah teaches the believers how to establish their allegiance with the Messenger. In order to be rewarded for this allegiance, they will have to live up to the words that they bounded themselves by when they made their oath, and this is what Allah will address in the next surah.

SURAH AL-ṢAFF

This surah instructs the believers to keep true to their word and uphold the standard of following the Messenger not only through their words, but with their actions as well.

Allah warns the Muslims not to stop at their oath, but to strive to fulfil it and protect the Messenger from the harm of their enemies as well as the harm that they themselves bring about through their disobedience.

Allah gives us examples of Prophets in the past whose people did not follow their guidance. Prophets Mūsā and ʿĪsā were cited, showing that this is not a new issue at all. In fact, one of the wisdoms of Allah citing these two Prophets is the fact that entire religions have been built around following them in name, but not in deeds. If they had followed their deeds, then the Christians would now be following Prophet Muhammad ﷺ because Allah says that Prophet ʿĪsā informed them that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would come after him. The Jews know that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is a real Prophet – just like they knew Prophet Mūsā was – yet they persist in opposing him and his message just as they did with the religion of Mūsā.

In conclusion, Allah teaches us to be dedicated supporters of Allah and His Messenger in our words and deeds, and He promises that he will give us success just as he did with the true disciples of Prophet ʿĪsā.

SURAH AL-JUMUʿAH AND AL-MUNĀFIQŪN

After receiving instructions to practice what we preach, we are now given two surahs that examine how people apply – or fail to apply – this principle.

Surah *al-Jumuʿah* shows us an example of a command that must be lived up to. A man who claims to be Muslim must leave his business and answer the call for Jumuʿah prayer. This is a clear test of how committed a person is to their claim of being Muslim. Some people used to skip the sermon given by the Prophet. They felt that they did not need to hear it and that attending the two *rakʿah* of prayer would suffice. They cared more about making money than listening to the advice of their Prophet. Hence, in this surah, Allah draws a comparison between people who recite their revelation but do not fulfil its full responsibility and donkeys who carry books.

Similarly, Surah *al-Munāfiqūn* gives us a more detailed understanding of hypocrisy. The key idea that is emphasized here is the fact that the beliefs of hypocrites don't match their words. They often show off in order to be seen as righteous and compensate for their disbelief. Yet, they will only do this to the extent that it feeds their pride. Therefore, they find it very difficult when they are asked to do something humbling such as seek the Prophet's forgiveness. Moreover, their perspective on honour and status are based on material things instead of spiritual, and this is why Allah encourages us to avoid allowing business to distract us from our primary function of remembering Allah and giving charity.

SURAH AL-TAGHĀBUN

In the previous surah, Allah revealed the signs of the hypocrites. However, in this world, such people are to be considered Muslim due to their outward actions and appearance. This could be misleading because one might assume that if a person is considered a Muslim in this life, they must also be considered a Muslim in the next. In Surah *al-Taghābun,* Allah disillusions us of this belief.

In reality, there are only two general groups: those who believe in and submit to Allah and those who reject and deny Him. The category one belongs to is determined according to how they respond to the Messenger that Allah sends to them. If they accept and follow the Messenger, they will be considered believers. If they reject the Messenger, then they will be considered disbelievers just like the disbelievers before them whom Allah has described in detail numerous times.

As the surah comes to a close, Allah highlights the main factors that can cause disbelief: a person's attachment to family and wealth. If

a person can manage their attachments to these things and make the sacrifices that are required to gain closeness to Allah, then they will be sure to succeed as believers.

SURAH AL-ṬALĀQ AND AL-TAḤRĪM

In Surah *al-Taghābun*, Allah mentions that a person's attachment to their family could contribute to their misguidance. Hence, these two surahs both expound upon how a person should address this matter.

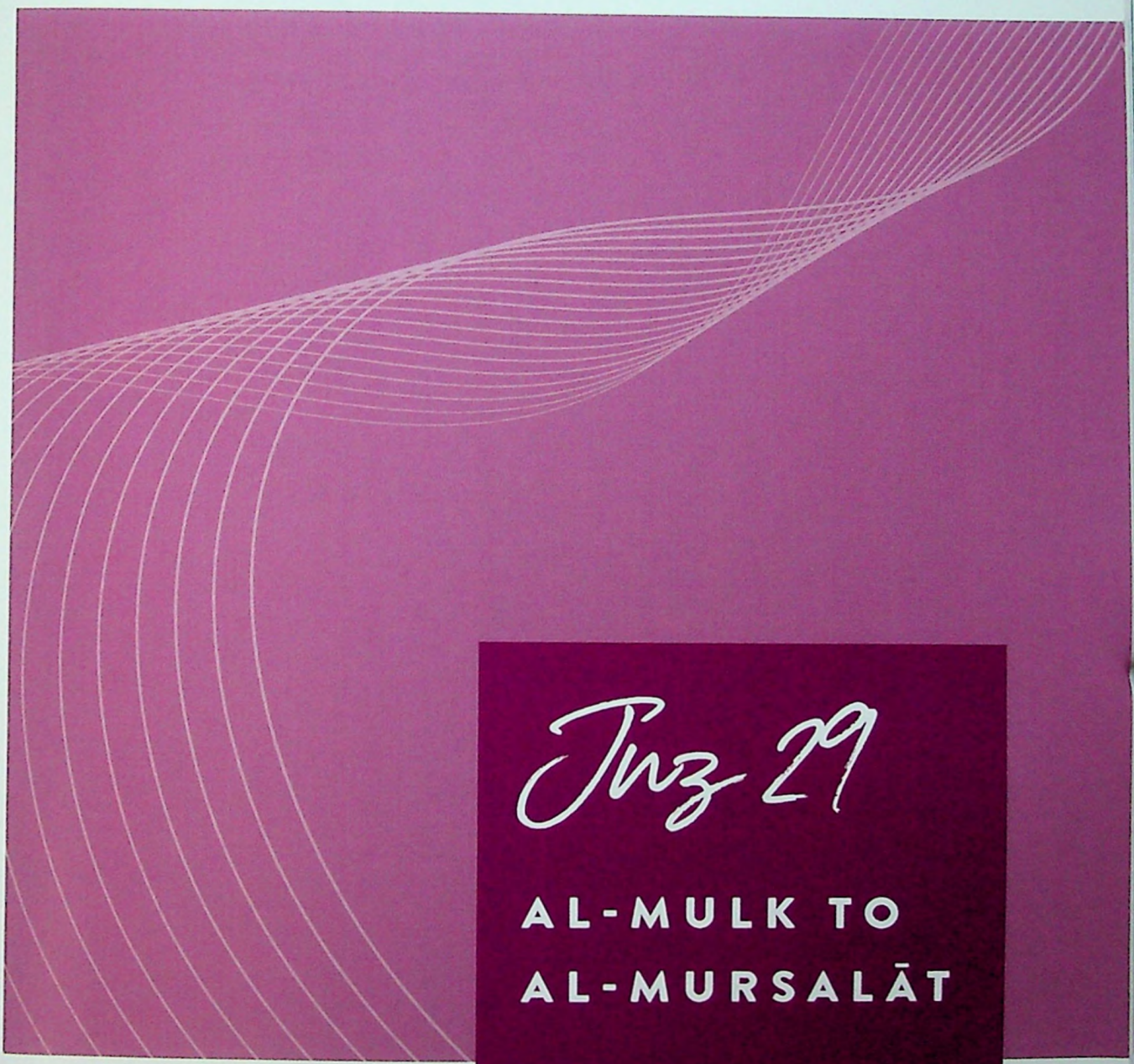
Surah *al-Ṭalāq* teaches us the legal process for divorce as well as insight into the spiritual perspective that one must maintain when going through this process. Since marriage is so strongly linked to one's wealth, status, and religious growth, Allah repeatedly reminds us to rely on Him in order to find success when we embark upon this task.

We are given a practical example of this teaching in Surah *al-Taḥrīm* where Allah teaches the Prophet how to deal with his wives if they have betrayed his trust and gives us descriptions of the characteristics of a righteous spouse. Moreover, Allah tells us to be proactive in protecting our families from Allah's punishment by encouraging them all to fulfil their religious responsibilities and by not being influenced by them to do something that Allah has not sanctioned.

Lastly, Allah contrasts the difference between righteous and disbelieving spouses. Even if a disbeliever is married to a Prophet, their relationship will not save them from the consequences of their disbelief and betrayal. On the other hand, if a believer is married to the Pharaoh, or not even married at all, Allah will judge them according to their righteous deeds and reward them for their belief. In the end, no person should allow their marital relationship to

affect their relationship with Allah. That said, marriage is supposed to be a vehicle that makes the path to Allah easier, not harder, and therefore, Allah encourages us to find the best spouses who will improve our religious life and encourage us to be righteous. If not, then divorce is sometimes necessary, and that will not reflect badly upon a person in Allah's judgment, provided it is done for the sake of Allah. He is the One who has encouraged us to marry and divorce for His sake; and Allah knows what is in the best interest of His servants.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Juz 29

AL-MULK TO AL-MURSALĀT

SURAH AL-MULK TO AL-QALAM

Surah *al-Taḥrīm* was centred around how some people can become believers in the worst of households while others can become disbelievers in the best of households. Now we transition into Surah *al-Mulk* where Allah builds upon this lesson and shows us that no one can control the faith of any human being, and that everything is essentially under His control. He has only given human beings a choice to test their commitment to doing good. Allah cites various examples of His control, turning our attention to examine how He created this world as well as the next. So no matter how much tribulation one suffers in this world, Allah will bring justice to those who were righteous, and we can be sure that the oppressors will suffer in the end.

Since Allah taught us that He allows people to do wrong as a test, one should conclude that the best course of action a righteous person should take is to patiently persevere in doing good until Allah brings His aid and victory. This is why Allah specifically tells the Prophet to avoid developing the impatience of Prophet Yūnus, who wound up in the belly of a whale. Then, Allah explains how the efforts of wrongdoers will always end in their own ruin, giving the example of the people who owned the garden. All of these lessons point to the principle of patiently staying the course of righteousness until Allah brings His judgment.

This aforementioned patience requires a deep understanding and certainty in the Day of Judgment, and this is one of the reasons why Allah gives us Surah *al-Ḥāqqah*. Just as Allah changed the earth to destroy the oppressive nations of the past, it will be easy for Him to initiate the Day of Resurrection. Here, Allah gives us a detailed account of how the Reckoning will be conducted. Moreover, Allah gives us descriptions of the extensive pleasures of Paradise as well as the unbearable torments of Hell. Allah refutes the disbelievers' notion that the Prophet is lying or making this message up himself. It is just a reminder from Allah for people who want to gain Allah's mercy. With this knowledge, the believers can rest easy knowing that no matter how things go in this world, Allah will bring people to full account in the next.

Unfortunately, all of these descriptions were not convincing enough for some disbelievers around the Prophet to take heed in his message. They had the audacity to ask to see this punishment so that they may believe in it. So Allah gives us Surah *al-Maʿārij*.

In the stories of the previous Prophets we saw what the consequences were for those people who disbelieved. We have learned that there is not much more that can be said to these kinds of people, as they refuse to listen to reason and invoke their own punishment. Therefore, Allah gives us an even more detailed description of the Day of Resurrection and teaches the believers the exact steps they need to take to remain patient throughout the trials of this world.

A comprehensive example of how this patience plays out among a disbelieving society is found in the story of Nūḥ. Unlike the previous stories about him, in Surah *Nūḥ*, Allah relates the story through the words of Prophet Nūḥ himself. Through this surah we

see exactly how patiently and thoroughly he preached to his people, and how they were eventually punished with the torment that they challenged Prophet Nūḥ to show them.

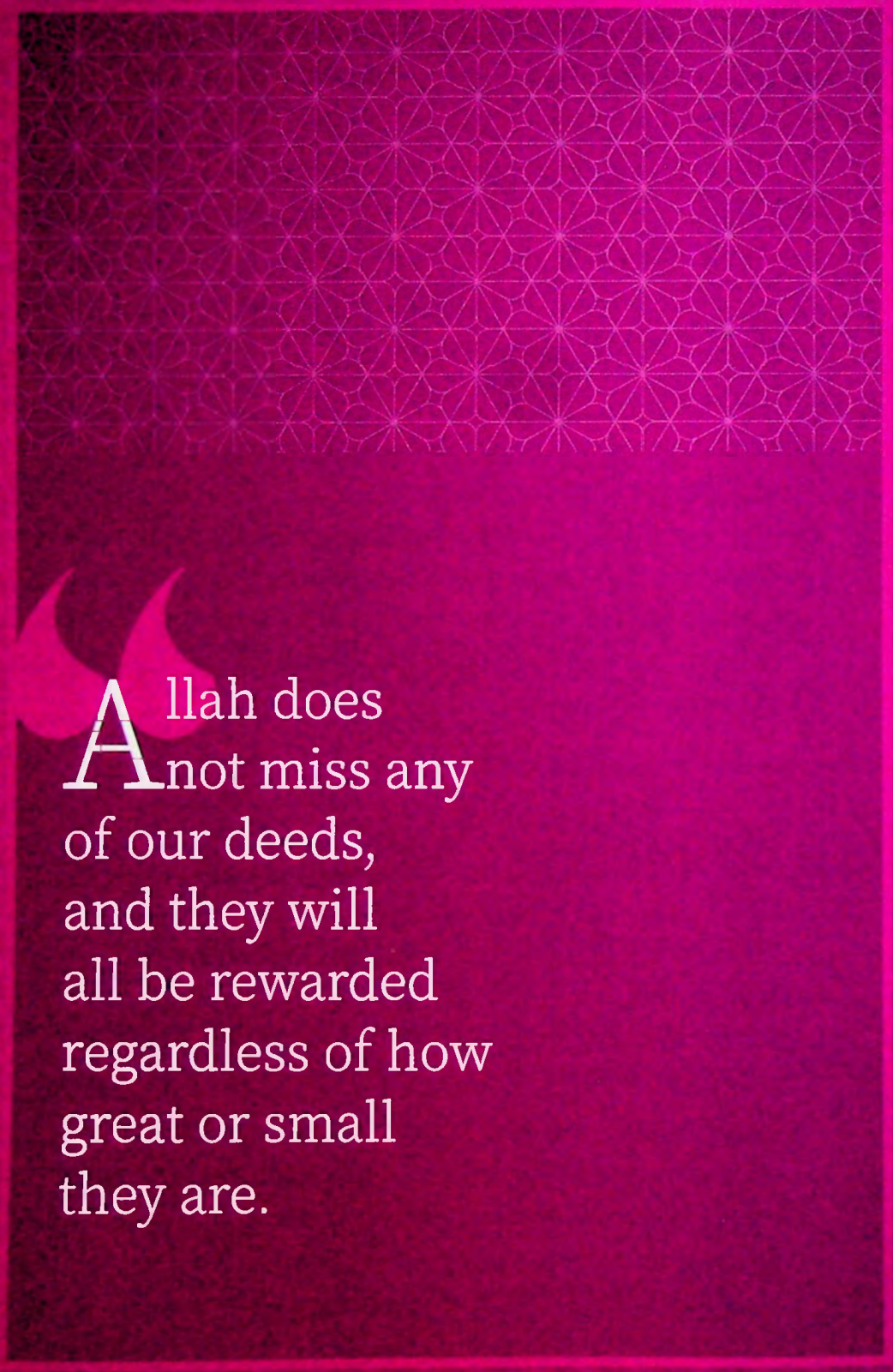
Prophet Nūḥ exhausted every resource he had to preach to his people: He made *duʿāʾ*, he spoke to people privately, and he gave public speeches. He made them promises of worldly bounties and pleasures in the Hereafter. He warned them of the punishment. He tried to reason with them through logic and intellectual debate. Not only did all of his attempts fall flat on deaf ears, but it actually made his people further entrenched in their disbelief and arrogance.

Once it became clear that his message would never move them an inch towards faith, he submitted to the reckoning that his people insisted to experience. The Prophet hoped for mankind to be re-established in this world, this time without any disbelievers, so that people will not have to deal with the level of arrogance and disbelief as he did. Fortunately, the nation of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ will not have to experience this.

SURAH AL-JINN TO AL-MUDDATHTHIR

In contrast to the devastating outcome of the people of Nūḥ, Allah shows us that the message of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ will reach an unprecedented level of success, so much so that his message will even convince beings from the unseen realm, such as the jinn.

In Surah *al-Jinn*, we learn that the patience mentioned a few surahs back pays off for the Prophet in ways that we would not have expected. Afterall, Allah is aiding the Prophet in the realm of the seen and the unseen. This aid includes knowledge of the realities of the Day of Judgment and instructions for people who want to prepare


Allah does
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they are.

for it. This is why it is important to spread the message of Allah to give people the best chance they can to prepare for their reckoning.

The next two surahs – *al-Muzzammil* and *al-Muddaththir* – will expound on the message of Surah al-Jinn by describing, respectively, how to gain access to Divine aid in the unseen realm, and how to guide people to prepare for the Day of Judgment.

Going into Surah *al-Muzzammil,* we learn that the night prayer and recitation of Qur'an invokes the assistance and guidance of Allah. Hence, Allah instructs the Prophet to leave his opponents for Him to deal with, and let them experience the consequences that they are asking for.

Surah *al-Muzzammil* also connects to Surah al-Jinn by showing us how Allah measures everything. In the last *āyah* of Surah *al-Jinn,* Allah explains how He keeps count of all things while in Surah *al-Muzzammil* He shows us that He even keeps count of the amount of time that one prays *tahajjud.* He details the different portions of the night and shares that He is aware of those whose circumstances don't allow them to pray for long at night while others do. In the end, we learn that Allah does not miss any of our deeds, and that they will all be rewarded regardless of how great or small they are.

This concept of meticulous attention to every deed is heightened as we enter into Surah *al-Muddaththir,* where we see the list of instructions the Prophet is given to fulfil his mission of preaching to his people. We also see a detailed description of the thought process a disbeliever goes through as he suppresses his own reason and intuition to remain in denial of the truth.

Allah also gives us numerical details of the guardians of Hell, and descriptions of the dialogue between the people of Heaven and Hell. All of these signs and prophecies are meant to show us how irrational disbelievers are to reject this message. Nevertheless, Allah still

allows them their ability to choose and calls upon us to patiently share this reminder to anyone who will listen.

SURAH AL-QIYĀMAH TO AL-MURSALĀT

Allah gives us the information needed to call people to the religion by giving us details of the Resurrection, the pleasures of Paradise, and the punishments of the Fire in the surahs *al-Qiyāmah, al-Insān,* and *al-Mursalāt,* respectively.

First, Allah explains how people will react to their reckoning in Surah *al-Qiyāmah.* He addresses the scepticism of people who think that the Resurrection is not possible and gives them the exact descriptions of how the universe will change when Allah initiates the Day of Judgment.

The Qur'an is revealed to give people a chance to prepare themselves for this inevitable event. But as Allah repeats throughout the Qur'an, people will have a choice whether they wish to prepare for it or not. In the end, they will be held accountable according to how they respond to this message. And in case they still have doubts about the Resurrection, Allah follows this up by with Surah *al-Insān.*

In Surah *al-Insān,* Allah gives us even more proof of the Resurrection by highlighting our origin and showing us that, just as He brought us from nonexistence to existence, He can also resurrect us after we die. Not only that, but He also gives us new descriptions of the people of Paradise. The details are so specific that one could envision themselves in the midst of the bliss. Allah gives us the details of the clothes that they wear, the people who will surround them, what kind of view they will have, what their furniture will

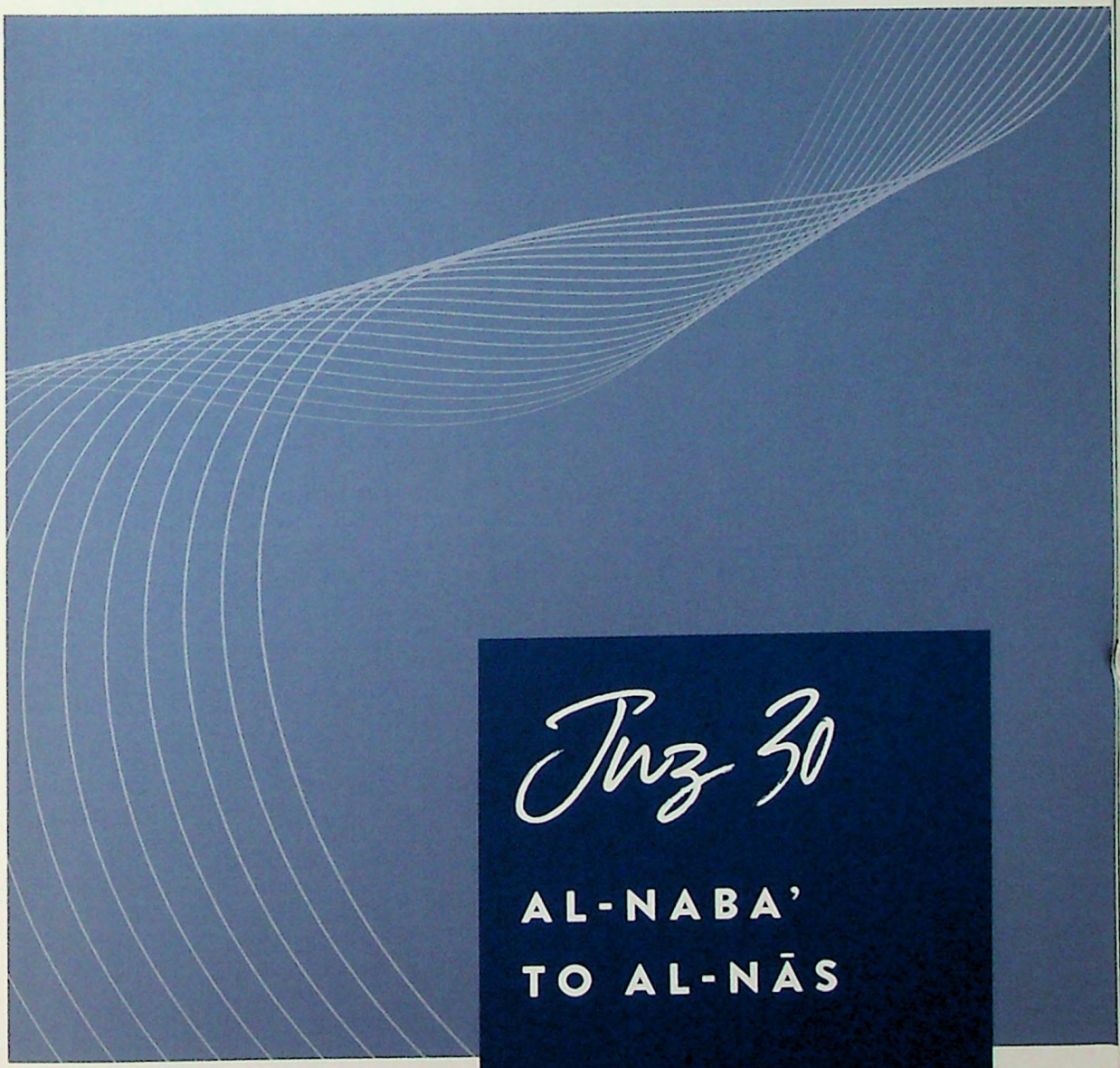
be like, how their faces will look, what they will be drinking, and even the material of the cups they drink from. All of this reward is for the simple act of worshipping Allah by following the guidance in the Qur'an.

At the end of the surah we learn the importance of teaching people the Qur'an and preaching its message directly to give people a chance to be reminded of the world to come. For this world is only one part of the journey of humanity, but their response to this message will define who they will be for the rest of their eternal lives. This is why Allah instructs the believers to remind people of their Lord so they can have as many chances as possible to turn back to Him if they want to experience His mercy in the Hereafter and avoid His punishment.

Lastly, in Surah *al-Mursalāt* Allah gives us vivid details of the state of disbelievers in the Hereafter, just as He gave us details of the state of believers in the previous surah.

Allah gives them numerous reasons for why they should have believed in Him, and then proceeds to describe what they will experience as a result of their rejection of His message. He also compares this with the rewards the believers will experience. In conclusion, Allah has given ample warnings, proofs, prophecies, insight, and reminders for humanity to believe in this message. There should be no doubt left in its validity or questions about its objectives. The message is so clear that Allah even asks, "What other speech could they believe in after this?"

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Juz 30

AL-NABA' TO AL-NĀS

SURAH AL-NABA' TO AL-MUṬAFFIFĪN

As we enter into the final Juz, Allah summarizes the message of the Qur'an through these concise, meaningful surahs by teaching us all the tenets of faith. In this particular section, Allah brings our attention to more descriptions of the Day of Judgement as well as classifications of angels, and the people of Heaven and Hell. Throughout all of these surahs, Allah repeats the theme of the Day of Judgment and gives it multiple names to emphasize the magnitude of this event.

Surah *al-Naba'* first highlights the differing experiences of people in Heaven and Hell. Then, Allah demonstrates an example from both these categories of people. He shows the contrast between the arrogance and denial of the Pharaoh and the humility and eagerness of ʿAbdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm in Surah *al-Nāziʿāt* and *ʿAbasa,* respectively.

Now that we understand these examples, Allah gives us Surah *al-Takwīr* and Surah *al-Infiṭār.* Here, He provides us with vivid details of what we can expect to see on the Day of Judgment and how much the heavens and the earth will transform as a display of Allah's absolute majesty and power. This is followed by classifications of the angels and people who will be defined by their deeds on that Day.

Lastly, in Surah *al-Muṭaffifīn,* Allah describes how the reckoning will proceed on the Day of Judgment. Here we learn how the people destined for Heaven and Hell embrace their deeds, either by the right or the left hand, respectively.

SURAH AL-BURŪJ TO AL-LAYL

In these surahs, there is a heavy emphasis on Allah's omnipotence and ability to do what He wills with His creation. He also gives us a framework of humanity that allows us to view our experiences with the correct perspective.

Most people do not think deeply about how Allah systematically controls the entire process of life and death. His knowledge is all-encompassing, which is why every detail of creation exists with a purpose and benefit. The more we examine creation, the more we find this to be true. Allah gives us Surah *al-Burūj* and Surah *al-Ṭāriq,* displaying his power and omnipotence and reminding us of how He has full control over human life and death. He gives us the story of al-Ukhdūd as well as others, teaching us that there is no plot that can help disbelievers escape the decree of Allah.

Allah builds on this theme of His power by demonstrating various proofs of it in Surah *al-A'lā* and Surah *al-Ghāshiyah.* He uses these proofs as indicators of how He will inevitably resurrect the dead and serve His reckoning and judgment. He tells Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to warn his people and teach them the signs that He has given them in the Qur'an. Ultimately, he will be following the same path of *da'wah* as his Prophetic predecessors, but this time, there will be no more Prophets sent after him. For this reason, it is of utmost importance that he relays the warning of the Day of Judgment more emphatically than the Prophets before him. And these surahs reflect that sense of urgency.

Once this sense of urgency has been established, Allah brings us to Surah *al-Fajr* and Surah *al-Balad,* where we are educated on how to prepare for the Hereafter. Heavy emphasis is placed on belief in Allah, feeding the poor, protecting the rights of the orphan, and avoiding obsession with wealth and material gain. Allah gives us

examples of people in the past who fell into these obsessions and it only resulted in their ruin. From these examples, we can infer that those who follow in their footsteps will likely suffer the same consequences. On the contrary, those who take heed of the message will find their sacrifices appreciated in the Hereafter.

From there, Allah presents the various visible signs from the sky in Surah *al-Shams* and Surah *al-Layl* to show us the duality in our environment, and how that duality plays out in the souls and trials of human beings. Just as human beings live between the physically interchangeable states of night and day, similarly, we struggle to navigate through the interchangeable states of guidance and misguidance. And we struggle with the choices we make that will either lead us to Paradise or the Hellfire.

SURAH AL-ḌUḤĀ TO AL-TAKĀTHUR

Although human beings are supposed to struggle through this life between guidance and misguidance, Allah promises Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that He will always be with him, and by extension, with his nation. Surah *al-Ḍuḥā* and Surah *al-Sharḥ* both emphasize this in a unique way, promising the Prophet success in this life and in the next. The level of success that he is promised is unprecedented in the history of the Prophets, and this balances out the hardships that he is destined to experience in his life, which will lead to the ultimate honour in the Hereafter.

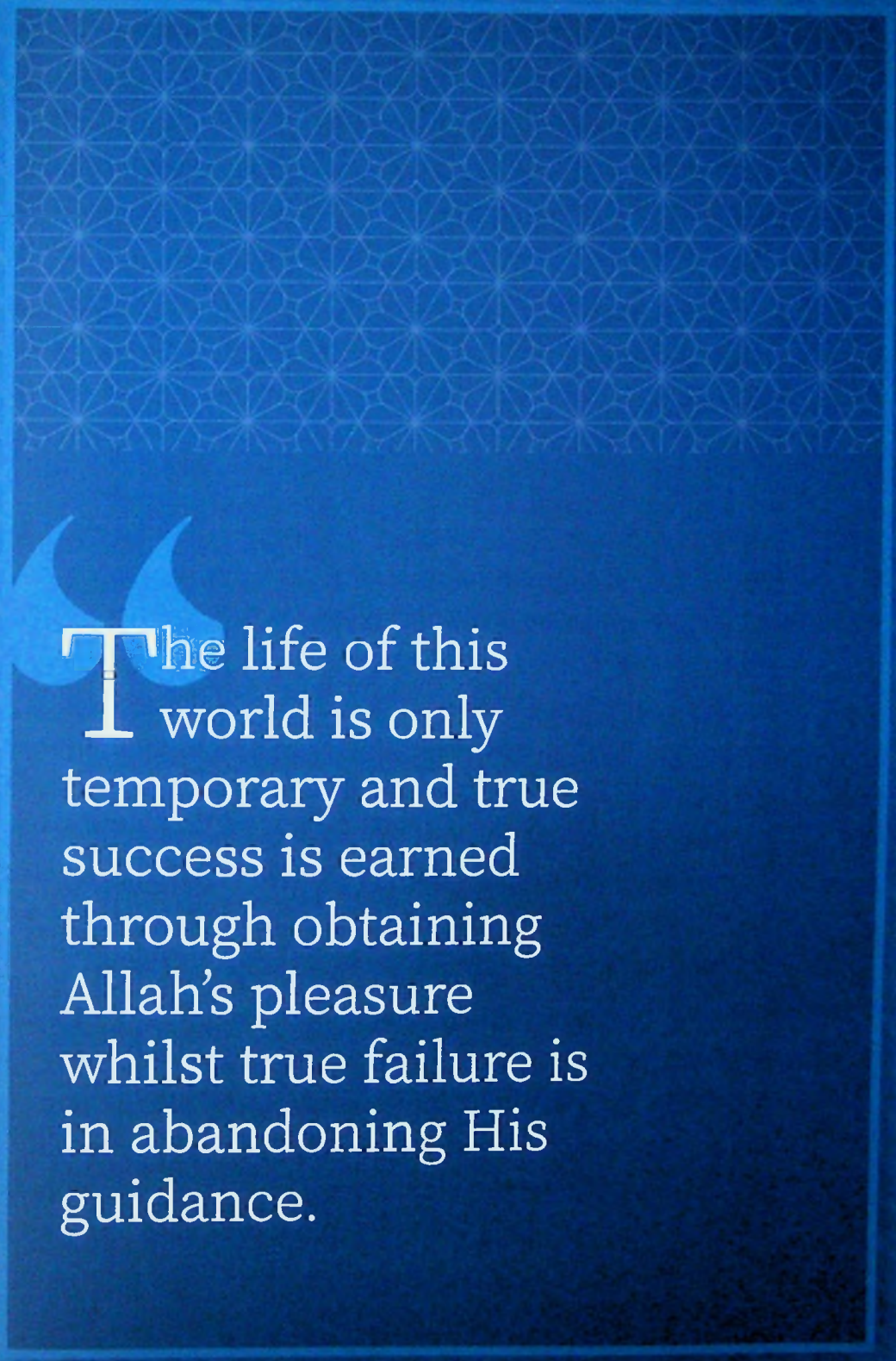
The Prophet has the highest honour in creation. And as we will learn in Surah *al-Tīn*, human beings in general also have been bestowed with being the most honoured species among all of Allah's creation. This surah presents the general dichotomy of honour and lowliness, and the reasons for both states will be expounded upon in Surah *al-ʿAlaq*.

As we learn in Surah *al-ʿAlaq*, this honour that Allah has given us is contingent upon our relationship with the revelation and fulfilling our higher purpose to uphold the command of Allah, receiving our guidance from Him. So those who persist in arrogant denial are using the blessings Allah gave them to inhibit human beings from fulfilling their full potential that Allah created them for. For this reason, they will find their perceived worldly strength completely void in the face of Allah's forces when Allah punishes them.

Now that Allah has affirmed the status of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ among man and the status and purpose of human beings in His creation, in Surah *al-Qadr* and Surah *al-Bayyinah*, Allah teaches us that the only salvation for man is to follow the guidance of this Qur'an. He also informs us that this Book is the greatest blessing for those who accept it, to the extent that a person who prays on the anniversary of its descent will have the reward of one thousand months of worship.

In Surah *al-Bayyinah*, we also learn that the Qur'an can be the greatest proof against those who reject Allah's authority and the leadership of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In fact, Allah refers us to the best of humanity and worst of humanity according to this acceptance of the message and Messenger, which is in line with the human highs and lows mentioned in Surah *al-Tīn*.

The imminence of Allah's judgment upon humanity is described in perceivable detail in the following surahs, *al-Zalzalah* to *al-Takāthur*, where Allah gives us powerful warnings of the Day of Judgment, the Resurrection, and the certainty that will accompany it. As the surahs and *āyāt* become progressively shorter, the reader begins to feel more of a sense of pending arrival of the promise that Allah is giving us which inspires a sense of urgency and longing for salvation that we know only Allah can provide.


The life of this world is only temporary and true success is earned through obtaining Allah's pleasure whilst true failure is in abandoning His guidance.

SURAH AL-ʿAṢR TO AL-NĀS

As we approach the end of the Qur'an, Allah gives us the short, yet comprehensive summary of success in Surah *al-ʿAṣr,* showing us that faith, righteous actions, good advice, and patience are essentially everything that a person needs to achieve all the good in this life and the next.

Thereafter, Allah shows us the recipe for failure in Surah *al-Humazah,* Surah *al-Fīl,* and Surah *al-Māʿūn,* which give us examples of how a person's words and actions will lead them to their own ruin and torment, even after a state of being blessed, as we learn about the Quraysh in Surah *Quraysh.*

In the case of Surah *al-Humazah,* Allah highlights an obsession with wealth, words, and gestures as indicators for a person's deviance. These more subtle signs of corruption are met with a terrible outcome in the Hereafter. On the other hand, the overt opposition that is displayed in Surah *al-Fīl* is addressed with an explicit response from Allah in this world, and the punishment of the People of the Elephant is one of the prominent examples of the inevitable failure of those who aggressively oppose the authority of Allah. We are also shown another example of failure in Surah *al-Māʿūn* where Allah highlights the ruin of a person who neglects prayer, feeding the poor, and engaging in small acts of kindness.

Following these surahs comes *al-Kawthar.* Through it, Allah teaches us that, instead of seeking gains through hoarding wealth, undermining the righteous, opposing the truth, and abandoning worship and acts of kindness, we should follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He has been given the most good in this world and in the next. In this world he has been given the greatest miracles, the best of Companions, the best of wives, the best of children, and the best of actions. And in the Hereafter, he will be

given the highest status on the Day of Judgment and the greatest pleasures in Paradise.

Therefore, Allah goes on to teach us to draw the lines between His guidance and the deviance of disbelief through Surah *al-Kāfirūn*. The results of this separation are manifested in the success shown in Surah *al-Naṣr* and the illustration of the downfall of Abū Lahab and his wife in Surah *al-Masad*.

In the end, Allah gives us the most powerful words of protection that we need to shield us from all forms of evil: the "Three Quls".

Surah *al-Ikhlāṣ* shields us from all evil beliefs about Allah; removing all forms of polytheism and idolatry from the mind of the reader and purifying the heart from doubting Allah's attributes.

Surah *al-Falaq* protects us from all forms of worldly evil: the harm that comes at night, the effects of magic, the evil eye, plots of jealousy, and all forms of harm from creation.

Surah *al-Nās* safeguards us from the internal harm that afflicts us through the evil whispers of all forms of devils. Combined, all three of these surahs ensure the protection of our minds, hearts, and bodies. With this, we are reminded that all victory comes from Allah, and that our protection is through following the Messenger of Allah. The life of this world is only temporary and true success is earned through obtaining Allah's pleasure whilst true failure is in abandoning His guidance. Having understood this, we are supposed to return to the beginning of the Qur'an anew, reminding ourselves once more that all praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Imam Hamzah Abdul-Malik is a Hafiz of Qur'an who holds a bachelors in Islamic Law and a masters in Islamic Leadership. He traveled the world to study with traditional scholars and has over 15 years of formal traditional Islamic education from Jami' Imam an-Nafi' in Morocco, Abu Noor in Damascus, Dar al-Mustapha in Tarim, and al-Azhar University. In 2012, he returned home to the states to raise his family and invest his knowledge and training into community building and Islamic education. He founded Midtown Mosque and Miraaj Academy and hopes to bring all of his experiences and skills together to serve the Muslim community.